Interview with Jack A. Sulser

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JACK A. SULSER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: June 14, 1994

Q: I notice that you were born in 1925 in Illinois. I wonder if you could give me a bit about your background, your family and early upbringing.

SULSER: I was born in Moline, Illinois in a Swedish community. My mother is the youngest of five children born in Sweden. Her father was a master cabinet maker in Sweden. He came to the United States and worked for a while to get established then got his wife and five children. My mother was five years old at the time they came to the United States. My father was born in Rock Island, Illinois, and his father and his uncle immigrated from Switzerland. It's a Swiss name that comes from the area of Winterhur in the German part of Switzerland. It's a name that's also common in the nearby parts of Germany, the southern part, and even into Austria. It is often spelled with a z, or zed as they call it. One time I was in Zurich, the largest city near where my father's family came from. I thought I would look in the telephone book, because there was never more than one other Sulser in any phone book any place I ever lived, so I thought it was not a terribly common name. In Zurich I thought if there were a few others there I might call and see if I was distantly related, because I knew my grandfather and his brother left relatives in Switzerland when they immigrated in the late 19th century. But I found, in fact, one whole page of Sulsers in the Zurich telephone book. The page was in three columns. Two columns were spelled

Sulzer and one column was spelled Sulser. My grandfather was named Christian Sulser and my uncle was Jacob. There were several Jacobs and several Christians, so needless to say I didn't telephone any of them.

Q: What was your father's work?

SULSER: He did many jobs. He was the youngest of two boys of the Sulser name. His father died when my father was only five years old, and his mother remarried a man named Maas, who came from Northern Germany, and proceeded to have two girls. So my father had two somewhat younger sisters. He was the mainstay of the family because my grandmother's second husband left after fathering these two girls, never to be heard from again. My father's older brother was never steadily employed. So my father was the breadwinner of the family. He left school after 8th grade and worked in a variety of jobs but finally wound up as a meatcutter and became a member of the meatcutter's union, which he still is. He was 90 years old last week. The older brother died when he was only 55. My father had always said that he was sure that since both the men in his family had died by the time they were 55 that he'd never live beyond that age. He still lives in Rock Island, Illinois with my mother, who is 89, and he drove out here just last year by himself. But in the meantime his health has worsened and he's not able to walk without the assistance of canes now.

My mother did graduate high school. An uncle of my father was director of planning at Rock Island Arsenal and a member of the school board—in fact he handed me my diploma when I graduated from high school, which was a nice family touch. His son, about 8 years older than I am, graduated college just before the second world war started. He talked at various times, I remember, about possibly going in the “diplomatic service.” It was the first time I ever heard that this was something that somebody of our background out of a small town in the middle west might possibly think of as a career. But it didn't register with me at the time as a possible career. This second cousin also got a law degree before going into the Army, becoming an artillery battalion commander in the 104th Infantry Division. After

the war he taught law at the University of Oregon and became Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court.

Q: I assume you went to high school in...

SULSER: Yes, I graduated from Rock Island High School in 1943, 50 years ago last year. All the way through school and in church and whatnot, I was active in all the musical and dramatic things. Those were my interests, never much involved in sports, and was always good in school, had good grades. But I never really had much of an idea of what I wanted to do with my life. In high school we had a very active vocal music and dramatics program. I was in everything that went on, and we had a radio broadcast studio in high school that was connected with the commercial station downtown. We did our own scripts, our own productions, programs, announcing. I was an announcer in these high school broadcasts that were relayed over the local commercial station. When the war came along, the announcers at the commercial station started getting drafted, and one day the program director called me up and asked if I'd be interested in coming to work at the station to fill in for these absent announcers. So I became a paid radio announcer for the first time and I enjoyed that very much. It made me a part of the community. Everybody knew my name, because I read the evening newscasts and I had the late night record program, disc-jockey you might call it. I thought that seemed like a nice way to make a living, and I intended to do that for the rest of my life.

I worked earlier at other jobs too, supermarkets, general stores, and what we used to call army stores in those days. A high school friend of my father had a gas station and I worked there on weekends. I happened to be working the day of Pearl Harbor. In those days people were out for drives on Sunday. In those little midwestern towns there wasn't an awful lot else to do. If it was a nice day you went for a drive. And most cars didn't have radios in those days. We had a radio in the gas station where I spent the day pumping gas, so we heard about it on the radio. As people came in to get gas, I would tell them about Pearl Harbor, giving them all the news through the open windows of their cars as I

was gassing them up. The next day at school there was a lot of talk about what this meant, a lot of people had older brothers or fathers who were of military age who were registered for the draft. This was going to impact a lot of peoples' lives. After one of our rehearsals that went on every day after school, the music director was driving me home. He lived not far from where I did. We were talking about the war and what this would do to families. I began to cry because I was only 16 years old and I thought I would never get to serve, that the war would finish before I was able to get in it and this was a terrible shame. It was a sad thing and I was worried. This professor, as we called him, told me he thought the war would probably last long enough for me to get in it. Indeed it did. The next year I finished high school. I was 17 and I enlisted, didn't wait to register for the draft or be called.

I had a choice of two college training programs because I had high enough grades: ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) and the Navy one was V-12 or something. Although I grew up on the banks of the Mississippi River and had friends and family who were water people, with boats and all that, without a moment's hesitation I checked ASTP. Since I was still only 17 years old, the Army said I should go to the University of Wisconsin in an ASTP Reserve Program. At the end of the term when you become 18, you go take your basic training and go on active duty and then go back to finish the four-year program and be commissioned as an army engineer. I became 18 during the first term of this reserve program, went off to active duty, basic training at the infantry school at Fort Benning, Georgia. While I was there, they decided they needed infantry replacements for the eventual invasions of Europe and Japan more than they needed engineers four years later, so I never went back to the program. I went straight from basic training into an infantry division, the 106th Infantry Division. I went from Fort Benning to Camp Atterbury, Indiana where the Division was due to arrive a couple of days later after two months of maneuvers in Tennessee. The Division had been formed and trained earlier in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. So I and others from this program, all of whom thought that when they went into the Army they'd be going back to college; but instead there they were sitting in Camp Atterbury waiting for this Infantry Division to arrive on Base. And it did,

coming off very wet, muddy maneuvers, with trucks and uniforms and everything covered with mud. We had just come from a spit and polish infantry school in Fort Benning, and I thought—This looks like an awful miserable outfit to be associated with. It looked better after they got themselves cleaned up! Then we got parceled out to various units in the Division that needed to be filled out. I wound up in a Rifle Company. Shortly after that, within a couple of weeks, several thousand soldiers of all ranks, including officers from that Division were taken out to be sent overseas as individual replacements. This suddenly opened up a lot of slots for noncommissioned officers, and within a month of joining this Division I became a machine gun squad leader. Unlike those who had trained with the unit from the beginning, training only in the weapon that they were personally armed with, in the Infantry School we were trained in every weapon in the Infantry arsenal in those days. I had, without any trouble at all, scored highest marks with each weapon and got an expert badge in each, except for the 45 caliber pistol, which I had to refire three or four times to even get the lowest qualifying grade, much less the expert rank. But machine gun was one of the things I was expert in, so I became a machine gun squad leader almost overnight and was promoted rapidly, as fast as you could be, to sergeant. I went overseas with the 106th which was the Division that was most chewed up in the Battle of the Bulge. It had just arrived at the front, taking over for the 2nd Infantry Division the week before the German attack in December of '44.

Q: Actually, that was a place that was being used to get people acclimated to the...

SULSER: That's right, and to give people a rest after combat. There were two U.S. divisions in that sector: the 28th Division which had been in action ever since Normandy and had been badly chewed up a month before in the Hustgen forest battles. They were sent down there to rest and recover from their wounds and to absorb replacements for their casualties. Our Division was to get some easy front-line experience before the major offensive that was expected in the spring to complete the defeat of Germany. In fact, the combat troops of the 106th were already in Germany, over the border about 5 or 6 miles. Two regiments of the three were sticking out into an area called the Schnee-eifel,

and the third was back a little to the south, just above the 28th Infantry Division. When the German attack came those two regiments were surrounded within 24 hours. They were not attacked frontally, as we were spread so thinly in that area that there were large gaps, hundreds of yards sometimes between squads and outposts and what not, and the Germans in reconnoitering the area before the attack saw that, so they didn't attack us frontally, just went around the holes on either side of the two regiments, closing the noose behind us. When we finally after three days got the order to try and turn around and fight our way back out, it was too late. We hadn't had anything to eat for three days. With flanking attacks on both sides that took place during that time, we had expended virtually all the ammunition. We had only whatever rifle, pistol, carbine each man was armed with, and by that time the Germans had brought in tanks and 88-millimeter anti-aircraft guns, which they used as ground weapons. Bad weather had grounded all U.S. aircraft since the battle began. In the day we were trying to fight our way out we were very badly mauled, losing at least a third of our forces, so the two regimental commanders instructed the rest to surrender. It was the largest surrender of the U.S. Army since Corregidor when the remnants of two regiments surrendered and spent the rest of the war in POW camp.

Q: Richard Parker was in that, did you...?

SULSER: Yes, he was also in the 106th Division. He was in the 422nd regiment anti-tank company. A lieutenant there. I had run into Dick occasionally in the Foreign Service, but in the 34 years I was in the Foreign Service I never really talked much about military experience or expressed any great interest in anybody else's military service. But a few years ago I was at a seminar in Fairfax, Virginia that was convened by an outfit that had a contract with the U.S. Army to do a study on how soldiers behave when their unit is getting beaten. The Army thought maybe there were some lessons to be learned to prepare people in the future for such contingencies. This organization contacted half a dozen people in this area who had been in the 106th sector to spend a day sitting around a table talking about their experiences. I knew each of the others except one man at the other side of the table that I thought looked familiar. He was looking at me too, but he didn't place me

any more than I placed him. About half way through the morning we had a coffee break and I went up to him and spoke to him. It turned out it was Dick Parker. It was the first I had known he had been in the 106th Division also.

Only this year I learned that John Bladgett had been in the same Regiment (the 423rd) with me. Thus, the 106 Division provided at least three veterans to the Foreign Service.

Q: What happened when you...were you taken back to Germany?

SULSER: After the two regiments surrendered we marched back for several hours to the next town in Germany, which was Bleialf, spending the night in an open churchyard there, gravestones and whatnot, a wall and guards around the churchyard. The next day we marched farther into Germany, to a town called Gerolstein, where most of us were herded into boxcars that had been used to bring horses up to the front. Gasoline was very short in the German army so they still used horses to transport a lot of their supply wagons and artillery pieces. They brought up thousands of horses to prepare for this battle in boxcars and then loaded them up with prisoners, 60 or so guys jammed into each car that had a layer of horse manure on the floor. Of course these boxcars were not airtight, had little gaps between the boards. By then it was the 21st of December of 1944 and the weather was very cold, a lot of snow around. I found out only in the last ten years, when I've gotten involved with some veteran organizations for the first time, that some of the men didn't have enough boxcars and marched for days to POW camps. I guess I was fortunate to get into a boxcar and ride the rest of the way. Standing up, because there was not enough room for anybody to sit down. The trains moved very slowly and stopped frequently for trains going in the other direction, towards the front, sitting on sidings much of the time. On Christmas Eve we spent the night at the railway yards at Limburg, and the RAF came over and bombed the railyard while this trainload of prisoners confined in boxcars was sitting there. Shrapnel was ripping through the wooden sides of the boxcars and they were tipping on the rails from one side to the other. The guards took off for the air-raid shelters and left us sitting in the railyard being blown around. Somehow, everyone dived for the

floor; of course the guys at the bottom were pressed into the horse manure. There was a lot of praying to Jesus and Holy Mary and Mother of God and everybody screaming and yelling like mad. As soon as the bombing ended it was “you son of a bitch get your boot out of my face.” The atmosphere changed very quickly. No one in our car was hurt, but we found out afterward that several people were killed in other boxcars that were closer to where the bombs landed.

The next day we went along and arrived at the first prison camp, which turned out to be Stalag 9-B at a place called Bad-Orb, about halfway between Frankfurt and Fulda as I found out much later. At the time, of course, we had no idea where the heck we were. We got out of the boxcars on Christmas Day 1944 and marched up the hill. Being a holiday in Germany, the townspeople were out in the street in their Christmas best, munching on cookies and other goodies, little children and adults watching us march by. We must have been a very sad sight, because by that time we had not had anything to eat for a week or more, nothing to drink except whatever we happened to have in our canteens when we were captured. Our uniforms must have been very messy. We could not have made a very good impression on the German populace in that town.

We got up to what was to be our camp just about evening on Christmas Day. It was dusk, and there was food waiting for us. There were some wooden barrels with boiled potatoes with the jackets on and some bread and they came with some soup. So we thought, hey, this is not bad. Some of the potatoes were not even finished, sitting in the bottom of the barrel. Beginning the next day we found that what we had had was a whole day's food, usually not potatoes anymore. Just the soup and the bread. In the mornings we had a cup each of what I guess you'd have to call herbal tea made from various berries and roots and things; for mid-day we had a cup of soup each that rarely had any meat in it. Some dried vegetables, some broth. In the evening, a loaf of bread to be divided among seven men; a small loaf of very heavy, dark bread. Never any utensils provided. Most of us had our canteens that came with a cup in the Army, so we got our tea in the cup. I still had my steel helmet, although it had a hole in it from when we were being shelled on the

first day of the battle. I hit the ground and my helmet flew a few feet ahead of me. When I crawled forward to retrieve it and put it back on my head, it had a hole in it. Shrapnel had gone through the steel helmet. But I was happy to put it back on my head anyhow. In prison camp this became the vessel out of which I had my soup every day. Most of us still had the canteen kit that had a knife, fork and spoon all hung together on a little loop. Although the knife was not really sharp, it was good enough to cut the loaf of bread into seven pieces. We very quickly worked out this system where the man who did the cutting was the last one to choose his slice of bread, and the one who had been last the night before became first the next day and you worked your way around. When it was your turn to cut you cut it as evenly as you could because otherwise that last piece would be much smaller than you wanted. We spread the 7 pieces around and the first man would study them, trying to see which was the largest piece. Everyone else would be saying “hurry up, hurry up,” because they wanted to get their piece. Then the second man would go through this and the third and fourth and so on down the line. That turned out to be our whole diet. The tubs full of boiled potatoes were a Christmas treat, not part of the daily routine.

The main purpose of this first camp was processing and interrogation. Get your name, rank and serial number and as much else as they could get out of you about your military training. The kinds of things they were interested in was how old we were, how long we had been in the army, how much training we had had, what kind of weapons had we been trained on, what new weapons coming along, if we knew anything about that. They would take us out to a building where the interrogations would take place, a single story wooden building, long and narrow with several doors on one side of it. They would break us up into groups of 20 or so in front of each door, and one person would go in at a time. Inside each door was a German sitting at a table with forms to be filled in. They'd ask all these questions, and if you didn't answer all of them, to their satisfaction you went back to the end of the line again. It was pretty cold and miserable, so you'd go through that a few times, back to the end of the line, then finally you were ready to tell him what he wanted to know. It could only have been of use to the Germans in putting together an estimate of

how badly off we were and whether we were scraping the barrel and taking people that were previously not considered fit for combat, or taking people with little or no training. Some kind of a strategic assessment was about all that they could get out of it.

We had triple-deck bunks in the barracks. We slept two in a bunk. They had little burlap bags stuffed with straw for mattresses. Each bunk had wooden slats across the bottom on which the mattresses rested. In some barracks there were not even enough bunks for two to a bunk, so some slept on the floor. The latrine was a large hole in the ground a few yards away from the barracks. But the barracks were locked when dark was descending so you couldn't go out to the latrine during the night. There was a little vestibule just inside the door to each barracks that sort of by mutual agreement was used as the night latrine. But then you had to clean up the mess the next morning when the barracks were opened.

During the interrogation that went on for a couple of weeks, the Germans separated the Jews from other prisoners. Religion was one of the questions and they looked on your dog tags. If you had “H” on your dog tag that meant you were Jewish. Some Jews, either not terribly orthodox or fearing what would happen to them if they got behind German lines, didn't have H on their dog tags. But if the Germans decided they had a Jewish name or looked Jewish, they were put in a separate barracks with those who were clearly identified as Jews. They also divided us by ranks. They put the officers in different barracks from the noncoms, and the privates in a third group and the Jews became the fourth group. We were told by one of our senior officers who tried to protest to the Germans about this, the reply was: “Oh, we thought we were doing you a favor. We didn't think you'd want to be in the same barracks with these Jews.” Which I guess was standard Nazi line in those days. The officers were sent off after about three weeks to an officer's camp. A week later the noncommissioned officers were sent to another camp, including me. And the privates and Jews were left at this original camp. I found out only a few weeks ago that then the Jews and others the Germans considered trouble makers were sent to another place that turned out to be a sub-camp of Buchenwald. It was the only known instance, as far as any of us is aware, that American POWs who happened to be Jewish were treated differently

than other POWs. They were put in a camp where they worked alongside Hungarian, Romanian, Polish Jews, whatever, and when they were too weak to work anymore, they were shot, just the same as happened in concentration camps. There were all together about 350 U.S. POWs who went to this camp, which was called Bergen-Belsen-an-Elster in eastern Germany, near the Czech border. Only about half of them survived.

A lot of people in the regular POW camps died from the diet. After we got to the noncommissioned officers camp, an American doctor was sent from one of the officers camps to be our medical person. Because he was an officer, he also became our senior representative. At this camp we had this same diet of herbal tea, soup and bread. The doctor estimated that it supplied perhaps 900 calories a day, which would not sustain life for very long even just sitting doing nothing, as we did. Depending on individual metabolism rates, people would begin to fade away. Sure enough, after a couple of weeks the first guy died, then a few days later another one and the following day, two. There were 1,200 non-coms who went to this particular camp, which turned out to be 9-A, in a little place called Ziegenhain just south of Kassel. When we were liberated at the end of March, we were down to 1,000. We had lost about 200 people from malnutrition. But the Jews at Bergen-Belsen had much higher casualties, losing about 50% by the time they were liberated. When this came to our attention for the first time, about four or five years ago, we started publicizing it a bit in our Division Association magazine and some scholars got on to it. The first one I was aware of was a guy named Michell Bard, who then got in touch with us and asked if people who had had this experience would communicate with him, which they did. He has written a book on this subject which is being published next week, finally. Since he began his research, two other people have contacted us and asked for cooperation from people in our Division who went through this experience, so I think there will be a little more publicity about it now.

I was fortunate to be in the first camp to be liberated since we were right in the line of the U.S. forces when they broke out of the Remagen bridgehead. Ziegenhain was right on the Sieg River, which empties into the Rhine at Remagen. They just came right on

up the valley, and there we were. We were liberated already on the 30th of March, six weeks or so before the war was over, and we were back in this country before the German surrender. We were given initially 30 days R&R to recuperate from the experience. I got back home to Rock Island by May 2 or 3, went down to the radio station where I had worked and went back to work immediately. Although I was still in the Army, on leave, they needed people and that 30 day leave was extended to 60 and then to 90, so I had 90 days furlough and worked back in my radio announcing mode the whole time.

Back in the Army again, I finally had a physical examination. Some of the ex-POWs were found fit for further combat duty and were sent out to divisions preparing to invade Japan, which fortunately they never had to do, thanks to the atom bomb. But this physical examination found that I was not quite ready for combat, so I was assigned to the armed forces radio service. I worked as an announcer at an AFRS station at Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan. When the war was over both in Europe and Japan, I was discharged in November of 1945, just a day before Thanksgiving. Went back home, resumed my radio announcing, intending to do it forever. With the G.I. bill available, I decided I'd also go to college. The Army had given me one term at the University of Wisconsin. I wanted to stay at home and continue to work at the radio station, so I enrolled at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, a month after I got out of the Army, but continued to work 39 hours a week at the radio station on the night shift and went to school full time during the day, including summers. I was able to graduate in three years. During that time I became more interested in my studies and less interested in a radio career, and my last summer at Augustana I was offered a scholarship to attend the Institute of World Affairs in Twin Lakes, Connecticut: 32 students, 16 American, 16 foreign, brought together for a summer. All of the foreigners were graduate students and many of the Americans were too. I still had one semester to go at Augustana. I decided from that experience that if I were to stand any chance of getting into the American Foreign Service I needed to go to graduate school. I had gotten some literature from the Department of State that suggested the majority of people who passed the FSO examination had some

graduate training, and that the majority of those entering the Foreign Service had graduate degrees. Some of the textbooks I had used for international relations and political science were written by professors at the University of Wisconsin, some by professors at Stanford. I applied to both and was accepted by both for the graduate program; but Stanford would only take people in the fall, and I was finishing Augustana in mid-year. I decided I'd go back to Wisconsin until the fall and then go out to Stanford. By the time the fall came I was so comfortable back at the University of Wisconsin that I just stayed there and got my master's degree in political science. I did a lot of work in the history department too, in Russian and Balkan history. Wrote my master's thesis on U.S.-Albanian relations, which came about because of a man from Rock Island that I had become very friendly with at Augustana College. We were in many of the same classes at Augustana, and I found out that he had been in OSS in Albania during the war. He had been a very keen amateur radio operator and got a high grade on the signal corps aptitude test when he went into the Army. Somehow, he got into OSS. All the rest of the people in the OSS mission in Albania were either Albanian-born or born in the U.S. of Albanian parents and spoke the language.He was the only non-Albanian in this OSS Mission and was radio operator for the group. Their mission was to try to get the partisans to fight the Germans, which according to him was a very difficult thing because they were more interested in fighting each other. You had the Communist-led partisan group that our OSS Mission was attached to, and you had a royalist underground group that the British Mission was attached to. Both the American and British Missions spent more time trying to get their respective groups not to fight each other but to fight the Germans. But they were obviously more interested in trying to get the upper hand for running the country after the war, and in fact, as history proved, it was the Communist group that had the inside track. After the Germans left, the State Department reopened its mission in Tirana. My friend was invited to stay on as the State Department Mission communicator, so he went across the Adriatic to Bari to be discharged from the Army and sworn into the Foreign Service and went back to Tirana as the Legation communicator. After about a year of that, he decided that the Foreign Service was a nice thing, but he didn't want to be a communicator all

his life. He wanted to go back to college and become a Foreign Service officer, so he resigned and went back to Augustana. His stories about Foreign Service life in Albania got me interested in the Foreign Service as well, and his experience in Albania got me interested in that country. For a graduate course I took at Augustana in historiography I needed to do a paper, and he had brought back some documents with him, Albanian government handouts that he was happy to make available to me so I did a paper on the OSS mission in Albania, the situation in Albania at the end of the war. When I went back to Wisconsin to graduate school, I expanded that into my thesis on the whole history of U.S.-Albanian relations from the time the country was first established as a separate country in 1914, after the Balkan wars when the Ottoman Empire was broken up in that area, to the establishment of the monarchy in the 1920s with King Zog, the Italian occupation, the German occupation and the rival communist-royalist missions, the end of the war, the arrival of the State Department, the refusal of the Hoxha communist government to accede to our conditions for establishment of full diplomatic relations, the withdrawal of the State Department Mission in 1946. My friend, Edward Nicholas, went to graduate school at Columbia, did his master's thesis on Albanian economic geography while I was doing one on Albanian relations with the U.S. We got together in Chicago in September of 1949 to take the FSO written examination, which as you may remember in those days was three or four-and-a-half days long. The half day was language exams and the other days were everything else; general studies, history, economics, English comprehension, quite a lot of writing, some multiple choice but a lot of writing. At the end of each day we'd limp out of there to a restaurant and back to a hotel and go to bed early because both of us felt as if we had been intellectually drained at the end of that process. There was nothing more that they could have asked us that we could have possibly answered. It was a very exhaustive examination—an exhaustive experience too.

We got the results in December, and to my surprise I passed the examination and he didn't, he missed by just a few points. By that time I was one year into graduate school at Wisconsin. Approximately a year later you'd have the oral examination. If you passed,

then the security clearance and the physical exam and everything. You faced the prospect of two years on the waiting list for an appointment as a Foreign Service officer. So I had plenty of time to finish my Master's Degree work, which I did in June 1950. My major professor at Wisconsin was Llewellen Pfankuchen, who was the only survivor of the group of professors whose textbooks I had at Augustana. When I went up to Wisconsin I found that most of them had left in the aftermath of the Joe McCarthy elections in Wisconsin, because most of the faculty there had backed McCarthy's rival. When McCarthy won and the University administration also became much more conservative, many of these famous old professors left for jobs at Columbia and Harvard and so on. Grayson Kirk, for example, John Gaus, all had been on the political science faculty when it was in its heyday. They went Ivy League. But Pfankuchen, I guess, had not been so involved in the party politics and he survived. He invited me to stay on as his graduate assistant and go on for a Ph.D., but by the time I got my Master's Degree I was sick and tired of school and ready to get on with life and make a living, so I declined the opportunity and came to Washington to take the oral examination and passed that as well. Meantime, my friend Nicholas took a job as a management intern in the Department of the Army at Rock Island Arsenal in our hometown. By the time he could take the FSO written examination again, he had gotten several promotions in the civil service, gotten married, so he never did reapply—the man who was probably responsible for getting me into the Foreign Service never joined himself! He shot up so fast in the Department of the Army civil service that he was a super grader long before I got to the senior grades in the Foreign Service. But we remained friends just the same.

Facing this two year wait after passing the FSO examinations, I applied all over the place for something to occupy me in the meantime, including a management intern position in the State Department. I took that examination, which was an oral group examination, passed that. I applied over in the Pentagon, because they had a vacancy in the Balkan section of Air Force Intelligence, and I had done the Balkan history work at Wisconsin and my thesis on Albania. They were interested in hiring me but were in a temporary

civil service hiring freeze. And I applied at the CIA, and they said I'd hear from them eventually if they had a need. But before any of these things could materialize, the State Department offered me an FSS appointment for the Polish veterans displaced persons program at the Embassy in London. I had been in England for a couple of months in the Army, liked London very much, had had a three-day pass there just before we went across the Channel to get involved in the Battle of the Bulge. I was very happy to take this appointment in London as a vice-consul issuing visas to Poles who had served under British command in the Second World War. It was a very interesting experience and fit in also with my interest in Eastern Europe. When Germany and the Soviet Union divided up Poland, the Russians were left with about half a million Polish POWs. After Germany attacked the Soviets, the British persuaded the Russians to release about a quarter million of these Poles. The Russians took them down to Iran and the British took them over, outfitted them, organized them into units, the largest of which was a corps under General Ladislaw Anders. There were Polish ships in the Royal Navy, there were Polish squadrons in the Royal Air Force, and there was a Polish Armored Division as well. All these Poles had fought under British command. When the war ended and the Communists wound up on top in Poland, many of these Poles did not want to go back. A good many stayed in Great Britain, nearly 200,000 of them. They were not eligible for American visas under the original displaced persons act, which applied only on the continent of Europe, not in the British Isles. But the Polish community in the United States lobbied Congress efficiently. In 1950 they passed an amendment to the displaced persons act to provide for 15,000 visas for these Poles in Britain, and the Department recruited three people who were on the FSO waiting list to go over and administer this program. I was one of those. Since we were new to the Foreign Service, London gave us two experienced officers, and I was the third officer in that unit. One of the other new fellows, Dick Adams, was put in the regular visa section, and the other new man, Walt McClelland, was transferred to Liverpool shortly after we arrived in England.

The program was originally to be one year duration, but by that time most of the Poles were so settled in Britain that they didn't come forward very rapidly to use up the 15,000 visas that we were authorized to issue. We advertised in the newspapers in Britain, the only time I'm aware of when the United States advertised for people to apply for immigrant visas to come live in the United States! But we advertised in the British and the Polish language newspapers, and we worked through all the Polish organizations in Britain, of which there were several, to promote the program. When the year elapsed, we hadn't even issued 10,000, so it was extended another six months. By the time the program lapsed after 18 months, we had issued about 12,000 visas. By that time, too, my FSO appointment had come through, much sooner than expected, in March of '51 already, after entering as a staff officer in July of 1950.They had originally said that when the FSO appointment came, I'd go back to the United States, go through the regular officer course at FSI and all that, but since I was already abroad that never happened. They just sent me new papers, new rank, new commission, new position and just continue to do what I was doing. So I never did come back to take the basic officer course or any other course at FSI. I never had a course of training at the Foreign Service Institute, which I regretted because years later one of my jobs in the Foreign Service was chief of the training assignments branch, responsible for assigning people to the Foreign Service Institute, never having taken a course there myself.

When the Polish veterans program expired in December of '51, I was sent up to the consulate in Newcastle in January of '52. I had done a final report on the program, what we did, how it had been set up, what problems we had had, what we had done with it and what the final results were. It was the first Foreign Service despatch that I had ever done, this sort of history of the Polish veterans program, for the record, and then went up to Newcastle, which was a two-man consulate. In those days we still had about ten consulates spread around the British Isles. The fellow who had entered with me, Dick Adams, who had been in the regular visa section, was sent to Bradford. We'd had one man in the program in Glasgow, who issued visas, otherwise London issued them for the

rest of the U.K., that was Toby Belcher, who later became identified with Cyprus, became ambassador to Cyprus. I went then to Newcastle, having done only Polish veterans displaced persons visas in London, and of course there was nothing of that in Newcastle. We had non-immigrant visas and commercial invoices, because in those days every export to the United States had to be accompanied by a consular commercial invoice. Those were the two main pieces of work in Newcastle. We had three British ladies. One did the visas, one did the commercial invoices, and one did the general administration there. A week after I arrived in Newcastle the principal officer, Harold Pease, went on home leave, leaving me alone in a post when I had only been in this one very specialized duty in London, at a time when London was the largest post we had in the Foreign Service.

Our NATO mission was still in London, we still had a large AID mission there, so we had I think three people with the title Ambassador and three people with the title Minister and pages and pages of American Foreign Service people there. In those days the Foreign Service list was arranged by rank, and within rank, alphabetically for each post. Since I was the lowest grade officer there was and my name began with S, it was the last name in six pages of the Foreign Service list for London. But suddenly I was in Newcastle and after one week I was the U.S. representative. Having been totally anonymous in London, I was photographed and interviewed by all the newspapers in Newcastle—new vice-consul in Newcastle. I got there shortly before the Lord Lieutenant's annual banquet for the Newcastle consular corps, which was sizeable, mostly honorary people, and this was a white-tie and decorations affair. My boss, Harold Pease, told me that I'd have a lot of use for white tie in Newcastle, it's a very formal society, you'll be invited to dinner a lot. If the invitation says nothing about dress it's understood that it's black tie, “smoking;” if it's anything special it'll be white tie. It'll pay you to have your own set of tails. So I went to a local tailor and he rushed out a set of tails for me for the Lord Lieutenant's annual banquet, which took place only about ten days after I got there, a few days after the principal officer left. Fortunately, on the day of the banquet I was out in the street and ran

into the Portuguese consul general, mentioned to him how my wife and I were looking forward to this affair that evening, our first big gathering in Newcastle. He looked at me, very surprised, and said, “Oh, the ladies are not invited.” It hadn't even occurred to me that a white tie affair would be for men only, so I rushed back to the office, called my wife, and said, “You don't have to worry about your dress for tonight. I'm going alone.” And there we were, all the local gentlemen, dignitaries, all in white tie and decorations, a very, very formal sort of stilted affair. Later that year the Lord Mayor gave his annual banquet for the consular corps, and for the first time in history they decided to invite the spouses as well. So the ladies went to that one. Those were the two big affairs every year in Newcastle. During the Lord Mayor's banquet so many remarks were made about how this was an experiment, to have the ladies there, and it seemed to be going rather well and maybe they would try it again the following year; if nothing untoward happened during the rest of the evening, it might be considered a success and they'd try it again!

But it was a great experience for me to be alone in Newcastle and do what had to be done, which was not an awful lot. I had time to get out and meet local politicians. In London one of the few friends I had made outside of the visa section was the labor attach#, because by chance he and my mother had gone to high school together. He had gone into the railway clerks union and become, I think, executive vice president, and had gotten a one-time Foreign Service reserve appointment as labor attach# in London. My mother had somehow kept track of this man, and when I got to London she said, “Oh, you must look up my old high school friend Glenn Atkinson.” I did, and through him I met many of the British union contacts of his. When I was transferred to Newcastle he informed some of his union friends that I was coming, so I was well treated by the union people in Newcastle, who also happened to be Labor Party officials. One of them, who was on the executive committee of the northeast Labor Party, invited me to attend their annual party gathering, from which the non-Labor press was excluded. He gave me a set of delegate's credentials. I was nervous. This was the first foreign political gathering I had ever been to. I kept my mouth shut so that people wouldn't realize I was an American. My host knew, of course,

and he explained things to me as it went on, but I didn't try to talk to other people. I spent the whole day there, and when I got back to the house that evening I dictated my first ever political report—to my wife—and sent it in. I got a commendation from the British desk in the Department because it was the first account they had had of how Party leader Hugh Gaitskell explained the loss of the General Elections two months earlier to an audience of party faithful. I also got a letter of reprimand from the political counselor in London (to whom I had sent a copy of my report) because he said that, since foreign government representatives were not invited to this convention, I was exposing the U.S. government to embarrassment by attending. My report had specified that I was the only foreigner there. I should have just not mentioned that, not bragged about it.

Q: How did you find the Labor movement in Newcastle? Were they sort of militantly left-wing communist, or what have you?

SULSER: There were some. But the people that Glenn had referred me to were certainly not in that category, including Sam Watson of the Miners Union and Lord Westwood of General & Municipal Workers. They were the moderate wing of the Party, which still dominated in those days. The militant left-wing, which was very communist influenced was small by comparison.

I want to tell you about my wife. On the ship going over to England, which was the Queen Elizabeth, there was a new Foreign Service secretary as well as we three new FSS vice consuls. After we got to London, I dated this girl once or twice. In March of '51, after we had been there seven months or so, she gave a cocktail party, and there I met another girl who was a secretary in the political section. I took her out after the cocktail party and began to date her regularly. After about six weeks I proposed to her and she accepted. When my transfer to Newcastle came through eight months later, we decided to get married. In those days she had to resign from the Foreign Service. A woman couldn't be married and remain in the Foreign Service. Her Foreign Service career was confined to London and then accompanying me the rest of the time. Thus, I had in my house in

Newcastle a wife who until the month before had been a Foreign Service secretary. When I got home from the Labor Party convention, she was already in bed, so I got in bed alongside her and dictated my first Foreign Service report to my bride of only a few days. We were married January 26, 1952. I came back from Newcastle after two weeks for the wedding in London. That was an unusual experience.

Since the principal officer was going on home leave two days after the wedding, he invited us to stay in the government residence. From being the anonymous, most junior officer in London I was not only temporarily the government representative in Newcastle, but we were in this magnificent government residence which had goodness knows how many bedrooms, servants, a tennis court in the backyard, a government car in the garage. No chauffeur, I had to drive it myself. I made use of it to tour the consular district during the four and a half months the principal officer was gone, leaving me in charge. Northumberland, the North Riding of Yorkshire, Cumberland, Westmoreland and Durham were in my district, including the Lake District and Hadrian's Wall, the old Roman Wall across northern England. It was really a very nice life, a nice honeymoon too in this lovely home. When the principal officer came back, we moved into a very modest apartment down in Tynemouth, overlooking the North Sea. I took the train back and forth to work every day, about 20 minutes in each direction. Life was a lot quieter after the principal officer came back. He was happy to have me do what little political and economic reporting I could generate there.

After nine months I was transferred to Bologna, which was a USIS sub-post of the consulate in Florence. I was assigned to Florence but resident in Bologna. I had home leave and transferred there.

Q: Let's see, I've got you in Bologna from about 1952...

SULSER: We got there in January of '53 and it closed in October of '53. When I got the assignment, I went to a local bookstore in Newcastle and bought a book on “Teach

Yourself Italian," and my wife and I spent hours with that book during home leave. When I got to Bologna I found that the Public Affairs officer had asked the Department to assign an Italian-speaking newspaperman. Of course I didn't speak Italian. The radio station in Rock Island was owned by a newspaper, and I had read the news written by somebody else on the radio, but I could not be described as a newspaperman! But he swallowed his disappointment and we hired a teacher from the local Berlitz School at our own expense who came to us for an hour every day to learn Italian. I had a local staff of 21 people, only two of whom could converse much in English, so here I was trying to learn Italian, trying to supervise a staff that was largely non-English-speaking.

Q: What was the staff doing?

SULSER: I was the Information Officer, and my side of the staff was distributing material to newspapers from the wireless file, things of that sort, hoping they would publish it. Trying to make contact with editors, and so on, get them to use information we could supply them. But most of my staff was distributing unattributed anti-communist pamphlets that we were publishing there in Italy without attribution to the United States government, leading up to the 1953 Parliamentary elections. We were trying to weaken the communists in Italy.

Q: Part of the Red Belt, wasn't it?

SULSER: Indeed! There were about 200 communes in our area, and nearly all had communist majorities on their elected councils. The mayor of Bologna was Luigi Longo, who was then the deputy head and became the head of the Italian Communist Party. We had several people who were bundling these unattributed pamphlets and delivering them or sending them out to churches, non-communist trade unions, things of that sort, who would pass them around. We also had a mobile film unit that showed anti-communist films out in the sticks. The PAO decided it would be good for my Italian to go out with one of these mobile film units for about two weeks. We had the driver and the projectionist, neither of whom could speak English, and I went out with them for two weeks, driving

from one little hamlet to another putting up posters of the movies we were going to be showing that night, usually in the village square, projecting them against the side of a building. These guys were just ordinary fellows, but as the stereotype of the Italian goes, everybody goes around singing opera all the time; and in fact these guys were opera fans. They had opera records and a record player in the truck and loudspeakers, and we'd play opera records for an hour before we'd show the films. In those days USIS was bragging about how many people would come up after such film shows and turn in their communist party cards, and that sort of thing. We were sending in monthly reports, “evidence of effectiveness,” how many communist party cards had been turned into us as a result of our propaganda activities.

The other part of the Bologna operation was a library, a beautiful library in an historic palazzo. When Eisenhower and Dulles took over in 1953, they started closing posts all over the world. They decided to close this information center in Bologna just after we'd spent over a quarter of a million dollars refurbishing the library. We got permission to keep the library open after the post had closed in October 1953. Two or three of the Italian library staff were retained. In 1955, when Johns Hopkins opened their Bologna center of the School of Advanced International Studies, they took over the library and our old staff there. So I had about nine months in Bologna, cramming Italian, learning Italian food as well as the language. While the Italian language was not retained very well, the interest in la cucina italiana certainly was...particularly la cucina Bolognesa.

Q: Did you ever have any people turn in their communist party badges during the time you were...

SULSER: The two weeks I went out with the film unit, No.

Q: To me it sounds very improbable that people would make that gesture. It sounds like one of those hyperbole jobs.

SULSER: When the post was closed, the film library and the mobile unit were turned over to the Italian government. The last thing I did was, again, a sort of wrap-up political report about the election results in our district, trying to show that in those places where we had operated either the film or the unattributed pamphlets on our behalf by Italian organizations that we'd had some impact on the election results. Clare Boothe Luce was ambassador at that time, and she came up to Bologna twice while I was there. The last time was for the formal rededication of our refurbished library. The Cardinal resident in Bologna, Cardinal Lercaro, who was known as the Cardinale dei Bambini, for his record with children when he was Cardinal in Genoa, where he was reputed to have had an impact on the communists. The church moved him to Bologna so he could work on the communists in the Red Belt there. He and Ambassador Luce and Mayor Luigi Longo, of communist party fame, got along famously at our reception. The three of them sat together and had a very earnest conversation in one corner the whole evening long. I can't say we had an awful lot of impact on the communists there. When I was assigned there, USIS was still part of the State Department. In August of '53 USIA was separated from State, and I was seconded to USIA for the balance of that assignment, which proved to be only a couple of months. When the post closed, I was transferred to Duesseldorf to start what proved to be the major emphasis of my career—Central Europe.

I went to Duesseldorf in October of '53, spent about six months doing nonimmigrant visas, about six months doing passport and citizenship and then became a political officer. I spent three years as the political officer. The consular district consisted of the province of North Rhine-Westphalia, which is the largest in population, the most influential politically, the richest province economically and industrially in the Federal Republic. It was a good place to be. It was Adenauer's center, it was the center of the labor party of the CDU, it was one of the strongholds of the FDP, the Free Democratic Party. It was also a major center of the Social Democratic Party. I had an opportunity to get acquainted with leading politicians of all three of those parties in Germany. People from all three later became very prominent on the national level. Rainer Barzel, who was one of my contacts, later became

head of the CDU. Wolfgang Doering was the executive secretary of the FDP, later became their faction leader in the Bundestag and many others.

Q: Did you have any problem having been a prisoner of the Germans to end up back in Germany? Did this take a little adjustment on your part, or not?

SULSER: I never felt that it required any adjustment. I never really associated what happened to me in prison camp, the 55 pounds I lost, the couple of hundred people who died, the occasional brutal guard who would come into a barracks and knock the precious cup of soup out of a prisoner's hand, had anything much to do with the Germans I was dealing with, most of whom had been in the German army, navy or air force themselves. A few had been POWs in the United States.

One of the contacts I had there had been in prison camp in Minnesota, and had taken the opportunity to take correspondence courses from the University of Minnesota and had been there long enough to get a degree! We were not offered any opportunities like that the short time I was a POW, although we had a lecture program, trying to occupy our time. Anybody who had anything they were willing to talk about, we'd post a schedule every day. The most popular lectures were about food. We had a Chinaman who had been a cook in a Chinese restaurant. He educated us on Chinese food. We had a fellow who had worked in the Hershey candy factory, so he told us about how chocolate bars and hand-dipped chocolates were made. Those were popular lectures. Another guy who had raised rabbits commercially for food was very popular. Anyway, no, I never felt that I had any great problem. I met a few Germans who had been in the Nazi Party, or even in the Waffen SS, things of that sort. I was less friendly with them and they were less friendly with me.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the organization. You did visa and passport work first. Were there any particular problems with doing this or were you...?

SULSER: The system throughout Germany then, before you issued anybody a visa, businessmen or anyone else, you had to get clearances from CIC in Stuttgart and from the Berlin Documents Center that had the old Nazi Party records. This often took weeks, sometimes months before you could issue a visa. We rarely got anything from either of those sources that was a problem as far as issuing the visa. I did a study, how many thousands of visas and how few of them were affected by anything we got from the CIC or the Document Center. While we were trying to help the German economy to recover, trying to promote German exports to the United States, to eliminate the dollar gap, we were impeding our own programs by delaying these visas. When we had no reason to believe after reviewing the application that there would be a problem, we should be able to issue the visa and not have to wait for the clearances. The Department approved that. That was, I guess, the first initiative I took in the Foreign Service that changed the way things were done. Much to the pleasure of all the other posts in Germany, the Department authorized us to get these clearances on an ex-post-facto basis and if we found something prejudicial in due course we would then revoke the visa, but in the meantime 99.9% of the visas were issued with no difficulty.

Q: A little bit later, around '56 or so or '57, I was a passport officer in Frankfurt and we had a lot of problems with people born in Germany, who went to the United States, returned to Germany right after the war, were American citizens but wanted to stay in Germany. Yet the rules were that if they stayed more than three years they could lose their citizenship. So there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing to get the people to return and they wouldn't, but they didn't want to lose their citizenship.

SULSER: Yes, although they were protected as long as they were employed abroad by the U.S. government or an American business company, as many were. There would be problems like that in Frankfurt, which was more of an American center in Germany after the war. I was later in Frankfurt and I saw the difference there. There were not so many Americans in Duesseldorf, which was the headquarters of the British occupation zone. We

did have some problems of Germans who had had children in the U.S. before, returning to Germany. Citizenship laws are a very, very complicated business, and I never really did it long enough to get familiar with all the ins and outs beyond knowing that there were those problems. We, of course, had to refer a lot of cases to the Department for rulings. We had a few American women acquiring German citizenship by marriage, and their use of American passports was restricted. We generally kept their passports in the consulate and we let them use them for purposes of traveling to the States, but if they were going, say, to Dubrovnik with their husband for a holiday, they'd go on a German passport.

Q: The majority of your work was within the German political system, was that it?

SULSER: Yes. Three of my four years in Duesseldorf I was the political officer and went to all the annual conventions of those three parties, hung out a lot at the Landtag, the State Legislature.

Q: You said this was CDU...

SULSER: The Minister-President, Karl Arnold, was CDU in a coalition with the FDP, as they were at the national level too. The North Rhine-Westphalia FDP was the strongest in the party at that time, and although they had no complaint against Arnold, who headed the labor wing of the CDU, they were very unhappy with the way Adenauer was treating them on the national level. They broke the coalition in Duesseldorf in order to warn the CDU nationally and formed a new government with the SPD. This was the only time during my years there that Duesseldorf politics got not only national, but international attention. The whole foreign press corps from Bonn came up to Duesseldorf for the critical debates at the Landtag and the final decisions ending that coalition and establishing the new one. Many of the American journalists came to see me as the person who could fill them in on the background: why was the FDP doing this and were these a bunch of neo-Nazis, etc. This was my first exposure to foreign correspondents, and I was disappointed. Of all the

American journalists I dealt with in 25 years in Europe, there were very few who seemed to me to be as well informed as the Foreign Service reporting officers.

Q: Were you getting anything from Bonn and your Consul General about how we viewed the three parties that were, I'm sure the KPD was even on the...we didn't even think anything of them, that was the Communist Party, but how about the SPD? Were we somewhat aloof from them, or how did we feel?

SULSER: I never got any guidance one way or the other as to how to view these parties, but it was certainly the view of the American newspapermen who came up to Duesseldorf that this was a very nasty thing the FDP was doing. My friends in the FDP insisted they were not taking the country in any great radical direction, and I couldn't see that they were. The SPD formed the new coalition with North Rhine-Westphalia and was a very moderate party. The FDP people kept me very well informed; not only were they very accessible to me but whenever anything very special was going on they would come to me to make sure that I understood what they were doing. To some extent I guess I was their man in the U.S. government to try and keep the Embassy and Washington informed of at least what they thought they were doing, what their intentions were.

Q: How about the SPD? Did you have many connections with them or not?

SULSER: I did, yes. Fritz Steinhof, who became the Minister-President in this first-ever coalition of that kind in North Rhine - Westphalia, and many others. All three of the parties would invite me to their meetings and even to their homes, and I became friendly with their families. It was an unusual opportunity for me, because this was really the area of interest that got me in the Foreign Service in the first place. My experience in the war, POW camp. It was curiosity about Europeans in general and Germans in particular, and here was an opportunity to see what these people were made of, so to speak, who they were, what they were like, and I enjoyed every bit of it.

We had a local assistant in the political section, a man named Egenolf von Bergheim, who had been a captain in the German army. At one stage he had been aide to Hasso Von Manteuffel when Von Manteuffel was the commandant of the armored school. It was Von Manteuffel who commanded the 5th Panzer Army that beat up the division I was in in the Battle of the Bulge. Von Manteuffel was then an FDP Bundestag deputy living in our consular district, in fact across the river, in Neuss. Our local assistant arranged for Von Manteuffel to come to the Consulate one day to spend the day with me going over very detailed maps of the Bulge area, describing where he was at every moment and where I was at every moment. I never had an opportunity to discuss the Battle with a lower ranking American general, but here I was talking to one of the top German generals because of my Foreign Service position. Of the three armies on the German side in the Battle of the Bulge, his was the most successful, making the deepest penetration to the Meuse River.

As far as attitude of the Embassy, they always seemed very interested in the information I gave them, but guidance, reaction was minimal to nonexistent as to what I should be trying to do or what my attitude should be toward these individuals or parties.

Q: How did we view the Germans and rearmament? This was a period of building up NATO. Were we concerned or not?

SULSER: We were keen to have it. In fact, one of our principal objectives in establishing NATO and bringing about the Bonn accords and the end of the occupation was to get the Germans to re-establish an army and put some strength in the NATO side. The other member countries of NATO were not doing as much as we thought was necessary. They thought they were doing as much as they could, since their economies were still recovering from the war. From the beginning the U.S. saw German entrance in NATO and German rearmament as the main source of additional conventional strength to offset the Soviets and other Warsaw Pact countries. Of course, when I went to Duesseldorf in 1953 it was still the occupation and there was no German army. But there was the Buero Blank that had been set up with our blessing, a kind of would-be defense ministry to do some of

the initial planning. The Embassy had the principle contact with Theo Blank; he was from the trade union sector of the CDU in Duesseldorf, so we had some contact with him as well and some of the other people in his office, including the former German officers who were setting up the screening criteria for the new Bundeswehr, to replace the Wehrmacht.

Q: What about the British? The British military was in your area, wasn't it? The British Army of the Rhine? For obvious reasons the British didn't seem to forgive and forget as easily as we did. Did you find the British sort of uneasy allies in that area? Did you notice that or not?

SULSER: They were not as enthusiastic as the United States was, that's for sure, but they were not nearly as reluctant as the French. The French were also more reluctant in rebuilding German industry. We had the Ruhr Authority in Duesseldorf when I went there in '53, which was sort of a precursor of the coal and steel community, in which the British and French were represented as well as the U.S. They were not nearly as keen as we were to get the German steel industry revived and end the reparations and the looting of the German factories on behalf of the Soviets and the other East Europeans. The British army was much less apparent in Duesseldorf than was the American Army in the Frankfurt area. We'd go down to Frankfurt for shopping and the PX and hospital and things of that sort. You felt much more like you were surrounded by Americans in Frankfurt than you ever felt in the presence of the British in Duesseldorf. Their numbers were a good deal fewer than the Americans. At my level this was not a problem. The political officer in the British consulate did pretty much what I did. We went to the same parties and political gatherings. The French political officer didn't get around to all those German political affairs nearly as much as the British fellow and I did. The British political officer had been in the area since 1945. He knew his way around much better than I did at first. He was kind of a guide to me.

With '55 came the end of the occupation and the restoration of a larger share of German sovereignty, although it still had some limitations on it. All the houses that the Duesseldorf

Consulate staff lived in had originally been requisitioned by the British military and then made available to us when the consulate was established there in '51. There were still many of the original people that opened the post when I went there in '53, but quite a few had left already by that time. When the occupation ended, the Embassy had to negotiate leases with the German owners of these quarters. We built our own office, because the Consulate was in what had been the residence of the chief justice of the state court. The courtroom and offices were across the street. We put up a building of our own just next door and gave the office back to the court. They cut it in two—put the chief justice in the back half, overlooking the garden and the front half became offices for his staff. We had our own U.S.-designed building, which we still have, although the Duesseldorf Consulate closed about 25 years later. As I was closing Bologna a year after I left Newcastle, that consulate was closed. My last overseas post in Rotterdam was closed four years after I left there. The only posts I served in that still exist are London, Vienna, and Frankfurt. (Since taping this interview, Duesseldorf has reopened as a limited commercial post and is expected to become a full-fledged consulate again when the Embassy moves from Bonn to Berlin. The office building has been leased to Mannesmann Co. for some years but may be recovered when the lease expires.)

Q: Today is June 23, 1994, and we are continuing the interview. Jack, you said you thought of a few more things about Duesseldorf?

SULSER: Reflecting on our conversation of last week, I don't think I gave you a very good answer to your question about what the Free Democratic Party, the FDP, was up to when it broke the coalition in North Rhine - Westphalia with the CDU and formed a new one with the Social Democratic Party. I think it was because the Young Turks in the North Rhine - Westphalia FDP felt very strongly that the national FDP was tied too firmly to Adenauer's Christian Democrats. He could take them for granted, and therefore paid little attention to their programs or their personalities. He would give them a couple of cabinet positions and then, as far as they were concerned, proceed to ignore them from then on. The North Rhine - Westphalia FDP felt that it was a mistake to be in a position of perpetual

junior partner to the CDU, and that they could increase their influence considerably by showing that they were open in both directions, that is, to the SPD as well as the CDU. They couldn't do anything about it in the Bundestag, because the CDU didn't really need them at the national level. But in North Rhine - Westphalia the CDU did need them to have a majority in the Landtag, so they used that power to make a point against the national position of the CDU. Some of the FDP Bundestag deputies, including my old military opponent General Von Manteuffel, just couldn't stomach the thought of a coalition with the Social Democrats, so they resigned from the FDP, formed a new party called the FVP, the Freie Volkspartei, which disappeared in the next election. But the North Rhine - Westphalia FDP did make their point. They got more out of the coalition with the North Rhine - Westphalia SPD than they had from the CDU, and ever since then on a national level too, the FDP has sometimes formed governments with CDU, sometimes with the SPD. As far as they were concerned, they achieved their objective.

Q: So you were there when that kernel grew to a...?

SULSER: Yes, this was the first time that this new position of being a swing party was manifested in a major province (Land) and it's been a part of German politics ever since. It has happened in other Laender governments in the meantime and on the national level too on occasion.

I mentioned the lack of specific guidance about what I, as political officer in Duesseldorf, should be trying to do and what my attitude should be toward the various parties and their leaders. In those days there was still a political officer in each of the consulates, and we had consulates in more cities in Germany than we do today. The Embassy would gather the political officers from the consulates, plus Berlin and what we called “land observers” in the provincial capitals where we had no consulate, for quarterly meetings at the Embassy in Bonn. The Embassy people listened and seemed very appreciative of any information or views that we brought in from the field. I can't say that we were given any guidance as to what our objectives should be and rarely if ever heard anything from Washington. Those

embassy political officers who were particularly concerned with internal German political affairs, Bill Buffum, Jonathan Dean and Hugh Appling, were always very friendly. Appling and Buffum came occasionally to meetings of the provincial political organizations, and we had very good contact with them. But I couldn't call it guidance; they certainly didn't tell me what I should be trying to get the parties there to do, although we all had a good grasp of general U.S. policy toward Germany.

Q: Okay, you went back to the Department where you served from 1958 to '62 in a variety of positions. What were you doing when you first came back, in 1958?

SULSER: It was shortly after what was known as the Wriston program had begun when a lot of Departmental civil service employees were more or less dragooned into the Foreign Service, and Foreign Service employees found themselves for the first time assigned routinely to Washington. Previously it had been rare. Only in the case of a medical problem of the officer or his family or because an officer was known to one of the higher ups in the Department and was requested for a country desk job, or a special assistant or policy planning position. But it had not been normal for Foreign Service people to serve in Washington. A lot of the Washington people that were pressed into the Foreign Service and sent abroad were out of the Intelligence Bureau, INR, and suddenly there were a lot of Foreign Service people in INR. I was in what was called the “requirements staff” in INR. I was responsible for keeping in touch with the Soviet and East European analysis in INR, the appropriate desk officers in the European Bureau and other agencies to keep our posts in those countries informed of what Washington wanted to know—what its requirements for information on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were. I prepared regular quarterly lists of reporting requirements. We'd do ad hoc requests as well, and evaluations of the reporting from abroad. When a new officer was going out to our Embassy in Moscow or any of the Eastern European countries, I would arrange briefings for them around Washington so they'd know who their end-users were and establish this direct, face-to-face contact with them. It was the first position since my Polish veterans DP visas in London that had anything directly to do with the area that had been

my primary interest before I came into the Foreign Service. I had no reason to believe from the comments I got in INR or in the personnel office that this was known when I was assigned to the job. It was just an assignment as far as they were concerned. But I took a special interest in it because of this background. I had requested on the old “April Fool” sheets, as we called them back then (because every April 1 you were supposed to inform the Department where you would like to be assigned the next several times, and any special studies and interests you had), assignments in the Balkan area and for Serbo-Croatian language training, none of which ever produced any response. But suddenly, there I was. When I called on the officer in EUR who was responsible for Albania (as well as Romania, it was Monty Spear), I happened to notice on his desk a copy of my thesis on U.S.-Albanian relations that I had donated to the State Department library when it was completed at the University of Wisconsin in 1950. In the course of our conversation I pointed out my thesis on his desk; he had not connected the author of that book with the person who was sitting across the desk from him. When he had taken over the job some time earlier, he had been totally without experience about Albania (his primary interest was Romania) and he had asked for background information. The only thing the Department was able to produce for him was this copy of my 8-year-old thesis.

After I had been in that job about five months, I got a call from the Washington assignments office in personnel instructing me to come over to the PER office to discuss a new assignment. I had not asked for any kind of transfer or reassignment, but of course I dutifully went over to the personnel office to be informed that I had been selected for a new position as Deputy Chief of European Assignments Division in the Office of Personnel. The position had just been created because the staff in European Assignments was overworked. I was taken over to meet the chief of European assignments, Tom McElhiney, and he told me they were looking forward to having me join, attend the officer assignment panels with him as a full member of the panel, etc. I said, “Well, do I have a choice in this, because I have a job I like in INR and now you are offering me a job I'd never even heard of or thought of filling before.” He laughed, and he said, “Anytime PER wants you,

you do not have a choice, that's your assignment." I saluted and went back to INR and told them I was being moved to PER. They informed me that a month later the chief of the requirements staff, Bill Stedman, was being transferred to university training in development economics, and I was to become the chief of branch, which would have provided a differential in pay. In those days a Foreign Service officer assigned to a civil service position in the Department at a higher grade received the salary of the higher grade without changing his FSO rank. I thought, "Oh well, now you tell me! But I'm told in any case that I don't have a choice; I've been drafted for PER." So off I went to PER and spent roughly a year as deputy chief of European assignments, learning that a quarter of all officer positions in those days were in Germany, and the European assignments handled over half of all FSO positions in the Foreign Service. We had twice weekly meetings of what was called Panel A, the officer assignment panel. After a few months McElhiney was transferred and Galen Stone took over as chief of the branch. Our staff was divided into two sections: one run by Free Matthews and the other by Sam Gammon, both of whom remain friends and who did very well in the Foreign Service, as did Galen Stone and Tom McElhiney as well. We had some excellent officers there, as were all the members of the assignments panel.

Q: We might just diverge here. One of the things that I think anybody looking at the Foreign Service, that is different from any ordinary business, is that personnel, which is usually sort of a routine clerical function, personnel is so key to the Foreign Service that really it is often some of the best and brightest end up in that. A Personnel assignment is a very normal thing for up-and-coming people.

SULSER: Well, certainly that was the impression given by the people in charge. It was an honor to be chosen and a recognition of ability and potential. I did find the work extremely absorbing. In those days PER had a great deal of authority. We would get lists of positions that were becoming vacant over the next several months, and lists of officers who were becoming available for assignment during that time. We would do our best to fill the positions with people who were qualified. We would research their performance files,

their records and language skills, we'd talk to anybody we wanted to about their abilities and suitabilities. Then we would come into these meetings of the panel and debate these assignments. There was always at least one member who would argue against a given assignment. There was a real give and take. The chairman of the panel, who was the director of personnel operations (Wally Stuart when I first went there, and Don Downs was his deputy), could theoretically make a decision unilaterally. In every instance that I can recall, it was clear what the consensus of the panel was. Then we would inform the appropriate bureau that we were proposing to assign so-and-so to such-and-such position. The Bureau Executive Office could go to the pertinent country area of the Bureau and tell them what was being done. If there was some objection or question raised, they could come back to us and say, this has been mentioned, that has been mentioned, we wonder whether this is an appropriate assignment. They could go to the extent of putting a hold on the assignment, good for one week. We would then go back to the panel and say, “This objection has been raised. We still feel this assignment should proceed.” Or we'd say, this was something we had not known, and we'd agree with the bureau that the assignment should not go forward. The panel would again make a decision and that was it! Travel orders would be issued and the movement would begin. You really felt that you were doing something that was important to the individuals and to the Foreign Service as a whole. You were making decisions in that panel, and I always felt they were good decisions. Despite the give and take and the occasional heated arguments in there, after each panel meeting we would go as a group out to lunch somewhere, and that would sort of smooth over any hard feelings. We all remained on good terms and in many cases are still friends with people who were in those panels.

Q: One of the charges often laid against Personnel is that EUR people tend to stay in EUR, ARA people tend to stay in ARA, you know, the devil you know is better than the one you don't know, or the Old Boy network, or whatever. Also, that some of the more senior officers would have favorites, somebody who was a staff assistant to an assistant secretary, often they would get better jobs. Did you find this mechanism working?

SULSER: There is some truth to that. It was often the case that people would remain within a given area, where they were known, experienced, where their qualifications were clear, and that was generally what the officer preferred. But there was in my experience very little intervention from outside on the part of the bureaus or higher ups in the Department. When Wally Stuart left, John Jova took his place, and Jova, whom I admired, was one of the smoothest operators I ever encountered in the Foreign Service, would have occasional meetings with Loy Henderson, who was then the Under Secretary for Management or Administration. John would come into panel meetings after those sessions with Henderson, which seemed usually to concern ambassadorial appointments or DCM appointments, and say, “So-and-so is being assigned to such-and-such position.” That was, after all, our own chain of command. All other jobs, section chiefs in embassies abroad, country directors in the State Department, etc., were filled out of this normal give and take within the assignments panel. Everybody on the panel, of course, knew other people within the Foreign Service, and when you're in a position like that a lot of people you know want to take advantage of the opportunity to try and get their view across as to what they'd like to do and where they'd like to go. So you're being invited to lunch by people you knew who are interested in some job that they heard was coming up. There was some of that, but a great deal less than you would assume. While there were a lot of approaches made of that sort, the results were not nearly what you'd expect either. The members of the assignments panel took their work so seriously that they would have been very embarrassed to come in and face their colleagues and propose an assignment that was obviously justified only on a personal basis. I don't think there was much of that. Maybe I was naive, but...

Q: No, I served later on, from '67 to '69 in the (personnel) counseling side of things, and it was very much the same. Then, let's see, you came to the Department in '58, so you were there, INR was about '58 or a little into '59 or...?

SULSER: No, I started in INR in January of '58, and I was transferred to PER in June of '58. After about a year there, the chief of the training assignments branch (Phil Chadbourn) was departing, and I was moved from being Deputy Chief of the European Assignments Branch to be Chief of Training Assignments Branch. Still a member of Panel A, but my job then was to fill up the training slots at FSI and elsewhere with people. All the way from the Senior Seminar and War Colleges on down to language classes, mid-career course, university training, etc. I did that for a year or so. I was also Executive Secretary of the Training Policy Committee, chaired by Henderson and consisting of several Assistant Secretaries, which made projections of training needs and budget recommendations.

Q: While you were in the training slot, what was the attitude of what you would call the most aggressive bright officers, the one we'd almost call the water-walkers, what have you, towards training?

SULSER: They did not want to waste time in training. I think that's a quick summary. Most of our training assignments were filled because people would ask for training or needed it for some job they were going to, such as language training. The most careful selection was for senior training, like the Senior Seminar, the War Colleges, and we would convene a selection panel of deputy assistant secretaries from around the Department and work up a list of FSO 3s, as they were in those days.

Q: This is approximately at the colonel level?

SULSER: Yes, I think it is 01 under the present system. Anyway, those who had above-average records, who were considered to have above-average potential, and we would make up a list of what we considered suitable candidates for senior training. We would draw their performance files and pass them around among people on this senior selection panel. Deputy assistant secretaries, even assistant secretaries, and we would sit around for days and discuss which ones should be selected for training. In some cases the members of that selection panel would consult people they knew who were among the

candidates and come back and say, “Oh, no, so-and-so doesn't want to go to training at this particular time because he's in line for such-and-such job or can't be spared.” The selections for senior training were done without regard to formal availability. These were not just people who were due to be transferred, concluding whatever assignment they were currently in. They had to be taken from something to go to this training. A number of people managed to get out of it by telling a friend on the selection panel that they didn't want to be taken. Some people who were selected by the panel and informed that they were going to go to War College or Senior Seminar would come back to us, usually through their supervisors or executive offices in whatever bureau they were in and say, “This person can't be spared.” We had considerable fallout, and much of that was due to the “water walkers” as you termed them, who didn't like the prospect of taking a year off to do something they didn't consider was necessary. Some of the most successful officers evaded...

Q: It's interesting. It's several layers. The most successful have often evaded it. The successful ones have usually had it. And the average run of officers wouldn't get to it.

SULSER: I think that's a fair appraisal.

Q: Language training of course is quite different. If you want a job in a difficult place but which may lead somewhere, you've just got to take the language. No doubt about that.

SULSER: Part of my duties in that position was meeting all the incoming classes of new Foreign Service officers, telling them what their training schedule was going to be over the next several months, how we would determine whether and what language training they were going to get, when their first assignment would be determined and so on. At the end of all that process, after their assignments had been determined, I would meet with them again and tell them where they were going. That was an interesting and pleasing aspect of the job, because I got to see the kind of people who were coming into the Service, their files, their academic background, their language abilities, their private work

experience, and it really gave me the feeling that the Foreign Service was upholding a very high standard. When I came into the Foreign Service in 1950, you had to have at least one foreign language to be accepted. By the time that I was in that training position, it was determined that this could no longer be the case, because if we continued to require foreign language the Service would be staffed largely with children of missionaries or with former Mormon missionaries since these were the only people in those days who lived abroad enough to really learn a foreign language. You could enter the Foreign Service without a foreign language, but you were on what was called language probation and had to pass a language examination before a certain number of years. So the question of getting language training when you entered the Service was important to these young people, the majority of whom did not have a language. Sometimes we had to do weird things, like taking somebody who already had a language and assign him to an English-speaking post because he didn't need the training, when he usually wanted to go where he could use that language. In the meantime, we'd put someone who didn't know a language into training and send them to a post where that language was spoken so they could improve their ability in it.

When we'd get someone who had a number of languages, they would stand out! One of them I remember was Melissa Foelsch, as she was known in those days. She was the daughter of one of the best known Viennese operetta singers, Melitsa Kordos, who made a number of movies back in the '30s, usually based on Viennese operettas like Tales from the Vienna Woods. Melissa had traveled around with her mother and came into the Foreign Service with a fluent level in half a dozen different languages. We assigned her to INR for her first assignment, where she was the Austrian analyst. The Austrian desk officer in those days was Al Wells. He was a staff aide to David Bruce when Bruce was Ambassador in Bonn while I was in Duesseldorf, and Al was then on the Austrian desk. He met Melissa in the course of their regular staff meetings and married her. She blazed a trail for women in the Foreign Service by refusing to resign when she got married. The Department for the first time decided that they were not going to require it. Some woman

finally stood up and said “No!” to what had always been the practice before then. The woman I married in 1952 had to resign. Melissa didn't do it. She stayed in the Foreign Service. They had one child then. When David Bruce was chosen to be Ambassador to the Court of St. James in London, he asked for Al to be his staff aide again; and Al went off to London leaving Melissa in INR. When she came up for her next normal assignment, she was assigned to Kingston, Jamaica, as I recall. Then she went to Paris. That was close enough to London; they could see each other occasionally again. She got transferred to London at a time when tandem assignments were becoming known in the Foreign Service, with both husband and wife being in the Service. But they had a rule then that one could not be in a position of any authority over the other, so it was only possible in large embassies. Al was Ambassador's staff aide then. So Al chose to retire. A little bit of personal comment on one of the people that I happened to meet in that training officer position. It had an effect on my career that I'll get to later.

As my normal two years in Personnel were coming to an end, I had been paneled for the Berlin Desk in EUR, to be my first country desk position. I was looking forward to that job. It was of personal interest to me and I thought it was a good job for that stage of my career. It was at that time that John Jova became Chief of Personnel operations. After he had been there only a couple of weeks, he looked around the table in one of the panel sessions and realized that everyone else there was about to leave. All of the experience and continuity would disappear. When the meeting ended, he called me to his office and asked me if I would be willing to stay on another year as his special assistant, give up the Berlin desk. I appreciated his position and his request, and I had enjoyed the Personnel experience so I agreed to do this. I spent what turned out to be nearly a third year in Personnel, as Jova's special assistant, which put me in charge of Panel B, the staff corps assignment panel. I was also the liaison between Personnel and other government departments with an interest in the Foreign Service, such as Commerce and Labor, for assignment of commercial attach#s, labor attach#s. While I was in that position, John Kennedy was elected President. The transition team moved into the State

Department, and they had a large number of personnel matters they wanted to deal with. I was detached from other duties and became Jova's representative to the transition team, and spent many, many hours, more than full-time, just dealing with proposals from the Kennedy transition team, trying to explain to them why they couldn't do what they wanted to do, or yes, you can do that, BUT...

Q: I remember, more than almost any other transition you had a lot of Kennedy transition people running around the corridors of the State Department, not only in Personnel but trying to launch attempts, sort of unauthorized attempts to launch foreign policy initiatives. I mean they were very activist and not very disciplined. Do you have any stories to tell about this?

SULSER: This was the only transition team I had any personal experience with, so I can't compare them. But I assure you it was a wild period, just in the field that I had personal knowledge of, the Personnel field. They had a lot of ideas about things they wanted to do and reorganizations they wanted to effect, people that they wanted to move around. It was a real new broom approach.

Q: Who were "they?"

SULSER: He had some ex-Foreign Service people on the staff. I can't recall names now. That was a very long time ago. We're talking 1961 here. But I recall feeling like a terrible "wet blanket" because I spent all my time explaining why something couldn't be done that they wanted to do or why something could be done, if at all, in a different way than they were proposing. Much of what I said was ignored. They found other ways to get these things done. It was an extremely active period. A couple of months after Kennedy took office, when Al Wells was transferred from the Austrian desk to London, to be David Bruce's staff aide, suddenly that job opened up. Jova, who said he felt sorry for having kept me in Personnel longer than the normal two years and having missed that Berlin desk job, said that if I wanted it now, I could take the Austrian desk position, rather than

filling out a full third year there. I said I would do that, because by that time I was becoming rather frustrated with the job, which was running me ragged, and I was not feeling as effective as I had before. I felt like I was swatting at ghosts much of the time, spinning wheels and not really getting a lot done that was very satisfying. So I left PER then and took the Austrian desk.

That was April of '61. As far as I knew, I was the only country desk officer in the Department whose Ambassador came to see him every week. The Austrian Ambassador had a standing appointment with me at a certain hour, it was a Thursday morning as I recall, where he could appear, usually with his deputy, to go over whatever questions he had in mind, communications he had received, issues the Embassy was considering, and I could go over with them things that were on our mind. It was Ambassador Platzer, whom I caught up with again later in London. He told me that when his predecessor was taking that job, while Tommy Thompson was Ambassador in Vienna, Thompson had advised this Austrian Ambassador coming to Washington that if he wanted to get business done in the State Department he should deal with the country desk officer and not, like most ambassadors in town, insist on seeing no one lower than an Assistant Secretary. Austrian ambassadors had followed that advice ever since—by that time, it was several years. They still consider it was an effective way to do business.

Q: How did you find this from your point of view?

SULSER: I enjoyed it, because I knew that none of my colleagues in EUR or other bureaus had that much contact with their ambassadors. For the most part, when their Ambassadors came in, the desk officer's role was to go down to the front entrance, meet them and escort them to the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary or Assistant Secretary, or Under Secretary or whatever, take notes and write up a memorandum of conversation afterwards; and, of course, draft telegrams going out to our Embassy in the country for approval at some higher level. Here I was, receiving the Austrian Ambassador weekly. In those days, a foreign ambassador could walk into the State Department and up

to the desk officer's office. I didn't even have to go down to the front entrance to meet him if he didn't stand on protocol. Security was such that he could appear at my door!

Q: What were the type of things that you'd be talking about on a normal visit?

SULSER: We talked a lot about Austrian assets in the United States, which had been seized back at the beginning of World War II, when Austria was part of Germany after the 1938 Anschluss. All Austrian-owned assets in the U.S. were seized by the Alien Property Custodian, as being German controlled and therefore, enemy assets. After the War, indeed even after the State treaty in 1955, we were still holding on to those assets. Although we had negotiated a treaty, that treaty had not yet been ratified to return the assets to Austrian nationals. As far as the people in the Department of Justice, who administered the program, were concerned, the Austrians who on paper owned or controlled these assets were really front-men for German individuals or companies and therefore they were not truly Austrian assets.

There was also the question of the South Tyrol, in Italy, the former Austrian part of northern Italy where there was an agreement after the war between Gruber, when he was Austrian foreign minister, and de Gasperi, when he was the Italian foreign minister, extending certain rights to the German speaking minority in the Italian South Tyrol, which the Italians referred to as Alto Adige. The Austrians were dissatisfied with the treatment that the German-speaking minority there was getting, didn't feel that the Gruber-de Gasperi agreement was being fully observed. They suspected the United States was not putting pressure on Italy because Italy was now a NATO ally. The Austrians kept hoping that we would press the Italians to be more cooperative and give more rights to the German speakers in what the Austrians called South Tyrol.

Those were among the normal things we dealt with. Shortly after I was in that job, I was asked by the Deputy Assistant Secretary in EUR responsible for our area, Dick Davis, to call the Austrian Ambassador and ask him to see him. This was the first time in the

couple of months I had been on the job that anybody higher up had asked to see the Austrians. I called Ambassador Platzer and asked, “Please could you come in and see Mr. Davis tomorrow morning?” On that occasion I did meet him and brought him up to Davis' office. The reason Davis asked to see him was to tell Ambassador Platzer that President Kennedy would like to meet with Khrushchev in Vienna if this was alright with the Austrian government. Ambassador Platzer replied immediately that he did not need to consult Vienna, he could say yes right then and there. That began the whole process of arranging the first summit meeting, the famous one in Vienna, between Kennedy and Khrushchev, in which Khrushchev was supposed to have tried to intimidate this young American President and scare him that they were going to take over Berlin and all sorts of things like that.

As the desk officer, I was involved in the logistic arrangements for the visit. Immediately after getting Austrian concurrence that day, the White House travel and advance people began showing up, needing arrangements to be made for all the things that are involved in a presidential visit. One of the first sessions I had with the White House people involved looking at the layout of the American Ambassador's residence in Vienna to decide who was going to be in what room, and I was rather shocked to find that President Kennedy and his wife required separate bedrooms; and of course he required that this and that assistant be immediately at hand as well. The result was that we had to ask the American Ambassador, Freeman Matthews' father, to vacate the residence! “Doc” Matthews was one of our most senior career ambassadors, one of the first to be given the grade of career ambassador. This was rather a shock to me that a President, going to a meeting in Ambassador Matthews' country, would pre-empt the residence, partly because the President and his wife required separate bedrooms. My original thought had been, okay, President and Mrs. Kennedy can have the master suite and Ambassador and Mrs. Matthews can move into the guest room, and there are still enough bedrooms for the National Security Adviser and the press secretary, Secret Service, etc. But no, they required every single room there, and Matthews had to move out into other quarters. We had a lot of meetings with the Secret Service and the White House communications

people, because of course they had to set up special telephone lines and all that sort of thing. Which had the little side benefit that I could call the Embassy in Vienna any time of day or night, through the White House switchboard and talk to people and get my business done!

As you know, the meeting happened, and everything seemed to go pretty well, except when the President got back, my gosh, we had a big program to build bomb shelters in our back yards and...

Q: It was a scary time. I think people forget about this. The reserves were called up in Berlin. I remember discussing very seriously with my wife whether it was a good time for her and the children to be in Washington. Maybe it was a good idea to get...I mean would we stay together because it sounded like there might be a missile exchange!

SULSER: It was a scary time. There were articles in the newspapers about bomb shelters and lists of companies that could build shelters that passed government requirements and were believed to be radiation-proof and all that. And about what kind of supplies you needed to store in your shelter and how long you should expect to be there. I even went to the extent of getting plans for one of these shelters, because the house that we bought when we came back for that Washington assignment had a very large hill behind the house that looked as though it would be ideal for digging in and making one of these underground shelters. The other side of the hill faced Washington, so I had the hill to absorb the radiation or heat blast that might come from the missile...we were only five or six miles from the Pentagon, so if that was one of the targets, well we were pretty close. It was a scary time and there were a lot of people in the State Department who were then involved in planning the relocation center out in the mountains, and with keeping the central records and identifying the people who would be moved to that location when the emergency came. It had a big effect!

Q: In the long run, I guess it was counter-productive, because it got the President's back up.

SULSER: Yes, he obviously took Khrushchev's threats rather seriously and came back and mobilized the government in a way it had not been mobilized previously, at least since the Korean War. It was a frightening business.

The following year, in '62, the Austrian Chancellor, then Alphons Gorbach, was invited to visit Washington. That was the other highlight of my time on the Austrian desk. I had to prepare briefing papers for the White House. There was a man on the NSC staff responsible for that area, David Klein, whom I had known earlier in Germany, who was responsible for putting the briefing book together in the White House. I was responsible for getting it up to S/S, which was responsible for getting it over to the White House. The main issue at that time was the Austrian government's express desire to have some sort of arrangement with the new European Economic Community. Austria, like many European countries, is much more dependent on foreign trade than the United States was at the time, and probably still is to this day, and a very large portion of Austria's trade was with Germany. Germany was in the European Economic Community, and the Austrians feared that as the Community raised its external barriers while diminishing its internal barriers to trade, this would work against Austria's interests. So they wanted to have some kind of an arrangement, which they had trouble defining, because to a considerable extent European Community was linked with NATO and the members of the Community were members of NATO; and Austria had put itself in a perpetual state of neutrality in order to get rid of the four-power occupation in 1955. So they were reluctant and felt the Russians would make a lot of trouble for them if they moved too far toward becoming a part of this European Economic Community. They wanted some kind of association with the Community, and eventually Sweden and Switzerland and other major European neutral countries also sought something of that sort. Austria wanted the United States to be sympathetic toward this approach. There were a lot of people in the State Department, in

particular George Ball, Bob Schaetzel, Dick Vine, who were all for maintaining the purity of the European Economic Community and for not watering it down to any extent that might be necessary to accommodate the interests of these neutral countries. In the process of trying to get agreement on briefing papers for the Chancellor's upcoming visit, these “Europeans,” I guess you could call them, decided that Austria could be seen as a “special case.” They were prepared to see some kind of arrangement made for Austria, but not for Sweden or Switzerland, on the grounds that Austria was not really voluntarily neutral. They rationalized that Austria had taken on this neutrality only to get rid of the Russian occupation (and in the process also the U.S., British and French troops). This was the position they wanted to work into the briefing papers.

Q: Jack, you were saying about the Europeanists, how they were coming around to the idea of making an exception for Austria into the European Economic Community.

SULSER: The Austrians were not sure how they should regard this. On the one hand, they wanted our blessing for some sort of association with the EEC; on the other hand, they did not want to be singled out as a “special case,” because they felt that if the other neutral countries were barred from any arrangement with the EEC, this would identify Austria as being not really neutral, being a little too associated with NATO, and that the Russians would cause problems and the whole thing could founder on Soviet objections. They were not very happy about this approach. Anyhow, that's the way it went forward. The man I knew on the NSC staff, David Klein, early on in preparation of these briefing papers, called me and said, “Where is such and such a paper?” I'd tell him, “Well, we drafted them and they're sitting over in RPE,” (where Schaetzel, Cleveland, and Vine were), or they're hung up in the Under Secretary's office, or they're in S/S, or something.” He said, “Well, you know I would like to see the papers in their draft form. Would you please bootleg to me every paper that you do, send me a copy directly. While it goes through the procedure and eventually gets over to me with all the necessary initials and approval, I want to see them

in their unadulterated form." So I circumvented channels and sent him everything as it was originally drafted.

One benefit I got out of this personal connection was when it came time to prepare guest lists for the luncheon the President was to give the Chancellor, or who was to go over and brief the President before the Chancellor arrived, these things were done at higher levels than I because they included congressmen, etc. Klein called me to say these lists had been received and my name was nowhere on them. Wasn't I interested in coming over and participating? When the message came over from the White House about briefing the President in advance, it was specified that it was to be the Secretary of State, the Under Secretary of State, and me! And I was on the guest list for the luncheon following the President's meeting with the Chancellor.

As it turned out, the President's meeting with the Chancellor coincided with the semi-annual ministerial NATO meeting in Europe, so the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary were at the NATO meeting. Thus, the briefers were to be Acting Secretary George Ball, Acting EUR Assistant Secretary Bill Tyler, and myself. We went over about an hour before the Chancellor was due to arrive at the White House and were ushered into the Oval Office and met the President. I'm sure you remember the innumerable pictures of meetings in the Oval Office in Kennedy's time when they had these love seats on either side of the fireplace and between them, facing the fireplace, a rocking chair on which the President sat. Ball and Tyler were on one of the love seats and I was on the other, and the President was in his rocking chair between us. There was a coffee table in between and he had his feet up on the coffee table and was gently rocking himself while we were talking, which brought his feet just about in front of my face. I noticed that he had the most grubby looking stockings on, much worse than I would wear even to go to work, much less to a meeting in the White House. They had been laundered way too many times, were shapeless and faded. When we walked in, he shook our hands and invited us to sit down. He had the briefing book Klein had prepared. It was a big thick thing, it must have been three inches thick, full of biographic reports and all these briefing papers on numerous

subjects, and he said, “I haven't had time to look at this, so you guys give me a quick idea of what this meeting is all about; and when we're with the Chancellor you take the lead, and when I get the feel for things, I'll chime in.” All the work that had gone into preparing that briefing book, only to hear him say that he hadn't had time to look at it!

Ball and Tyler quickly reviewed some of the issues and how we felt about them, of which the question of the association with the EEC was the principal one. Before we had talked even 10 minutes or so, somebody came in with a beautiful teak box which he opened to show the President. This was the present from the Chancellor to the President, which would be given to him later by the Chancellor. This staff person thought he might like to see it first, before he was given it officially. It was a boarding saber from an Austrian warship, because of the President's naval experience in World War II. The President reacted with great glee, snatching it out of the box and waving it around like a kid at Christmas. There was a plaque on the inside lid of the box saying it was a boarding saber from a vessel that had fought in the war of Schleswig-Holstein. The President turned to Ball and said, “Who were they fighting in the war of Schleswig-Holstein.” Ball didn't know and he turned to Tyler. Tyler didn't know and turned to me. This was the first question in the briefing process that had gotten down to me. The rest were fielded by Ball and Tyler and I was just an interested onlooker. Of course, I didn't know either. When I got home, I looked it up in the history books and found that it was the German states, Prussia and Austria, fighting Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein before the formation of the German Empire.

By the time this little incident ended, another staff member stuck his head in the door and announced that the Chancellor and his party were arriving at the front entrance. The four of us jumped up and went down the hall to an elevator into the basement of the White House. We were walking down a long narrow corridor of the basement, and at one point Lyndon Johnson was standing in the corridor. As the four of us caught up with him, nothing was said to him, nobody even said hello. He fell in behind us, and we proceeded on down the corridor. We came to an elevator to take us up to the level of the front entrance. The

elevator door opened, and the President and Ball, who were busy talking, and Tyler and I and the Vice President filed into the elevator and went up to the main floor. I was the last one to step into the elevator, so I was closest to the door. When we got to the main floor, the President's naval aide, Tad Shepard, was standing there waiting to escort the party to the front entrance. Nobody had briefed me on protocol in the White House. I didn't know whether being closest to the door I was supposed to step out, or whether the President was supposed to make his way through us and go out first. I didn't know what to do since no one else was moving. I began to teeter forward, teeter back, teeter forward again. Finally, I caught Tad Shepard's eye, and when I began to teeter forward again he shook his head as if to say, “No, No!” So then I knew I was supposed to wait. Sure enough, when the President got finished saying whatever he was saying to Ball, he wormed through the crowd and came out first. And then Johnson, then Ball, then Tyler and finally me. By this time the Chancellor and Foreign Minister Kreisky, Ambassador Platzer and Deputy Foreign Minister Steiner, who was a People's Party man, were at the front door. We went up and welcomed them and showed them down to the Cabinet Room, where the meeting was to be held. Nora Lejins, the State Department principal German translator, was waiting there, and the meeting progressed with the Americans on one side of the Cabinet table and the Austrians and Lejins on the other side.

Chancellor Gorbach did not speak English, but the other three Austrians did, so the discussion was a mixture of German and English. As the President had instructed in the Oval Office, Tyler and Ball did most of the talking and responding to the Chancellor's questions. After a time President Kennedy chimed in, more or less supporting what had been said and expressing his best wishes and best hopes, all that kind of business. It was agreed that Tyler and Foreign Secretary Kreisky should get together on a statement to be made at the end of the meeting. They went off into one corner of the room, and the Chancellor took the opportunity to present the boarding saber to the President. It had been rewrapped in the meantime. The President opened the package and acted beautifully, as if he had never seen the thing before and again was obviously very pleased with his

present, thanked the Chancellor profusely and said, “Come with me.” He sort of grabbed the Chancellor's elbow and ushered him back into the Oval Office, I tagged along because Mrs. Lejins was busy working on this statement to be made in German for Gorbach to tell the press when he emerged later that day from the meeting. Since Gorbach didn't speak English, I went with him and the President back into the Oval Office. As we passed through Mrs. Lincoln's room, the President's secretary, between the Cabinet Room and the Oval Office, he told her to have the press come in. He wanted pictures taken with the Chancellor and the boarding saber. Moments after we got into the Oval Office, another door opened up and several newspapermen came in and photographers and Kennedy went through the business of flashing the saber around, shaking the Chancellor's hand, and the Chancellor would look at me for translation of what the President had said. For a moment I was the unofficial interpreter. Forever after, as long as Kennedy was alive, pictures that appeared in newspapers and magazines of him in the Oval Office, there was this saber and the scabbard it came in hung on the wall. He apparently did genuinely like it and had it mounted on the wall. I still have in my study at home a very large copy of one of the pictures taken of Kennedy and Gorbach with this saber. It was a nice occasion.

After the meeting was over, they had the luncheon in the State Dining Room. It was a sizeable affair and there were toasts and whatnot. McGeorge Bundy, the National Security Adviser—I'd never met him—came up to me and thanked me for including him in the guest list. I said, “This didn't have anything to do with me. This was done in the Protocol Office or somewhere.” It seemed to me to be taken for granted the National Security Adviser would be there, but he came up and thanked me (erroneously) for getting him invited to the luncheon.

That evening the Austrian Ambassador gave a very nice black-tie dinner at his residence which the President did not attend. The Vice President was there and Ball and Tyler. It was a very pleasant day for me.

We had one other important visitor during my time on the desk, the Austrian Defense Minister, Schleinzer. He was People's Party and came with his deputy from the Socialist Party (Roesch), because they had what was called the “Big Coalition” at the time, the two main parties. They divided up all the Cabinet posts and each minister had a deputy from the other party. In the foreign ministry Kreisky was Socialist, his deputy was People's Party. The Defense Ministry was the other way around. They came over in connection with their request to borrow $50-60 million to buy more American military equipment for the Austrian armed forces. When the occupation ended in 1955, we had built up a large stockpile of military equipment for the purpose of equipping the Austrian Army when it was recreated. The Pentagon was scared there would be a hiatus between the departure of the foreign occupation troops and the build-up of an effective Austrian Army. In the meantime, if there was any kind of problem, the Russians would be able to re-occupy not only their zone but maybe the whole country with very little effective resistance. It would take so long to build up this Austrian Army.

One of the measures they took was to develop a stockpile of equipment, and the British and French turned over some small amounts too, but about 95% or so—the new Austrian Army looked like the old American army—their equipment, their helmets, everything was American. By 1962 some of this stuff was wearing out. In any case, they wanted to get more modern equipment, particularly the new M-1 tanks the American Army had developed, and they wanted to borrow money. That was the other major issue I worked on during that time, to try to get a coordinated position within the U.S. government as to whether we wanted to extend credits to them and on what terms, because they didn't feel they could pay cash. The Pentagon, of course, was all in favor of selling the equipment. The Treasury Department was not in favor of giving the Austrians a free ride on a loan, wanted them to pay commercial interest rates. The Austrians thought it would look less like a non-neutral U.S.-Austrian military deal if the credit appeared more commercial, namely from the U.S. Export-Import Bank, rather than from the U.S. government as such. There were a lot of negotiations, and we finally arrived at an agreed position. The credit was

extended to them and they bought the equipment, which made their forces look even more American, more up to date than it had before.

There were other military issues. In the State Treaty the Austrians were prohibited from having “guided missiles.” By 1961-'62, because of the improvement of aircraft that had ensued in the meantime, aircraft were firing rockets, and you needed some kind of guided missile for anti-aircraft defense. If the Austrians were to have any kind of effective air force and anti-aircraft equipment, they needed something that could be called guided missiles, although almost certainly the language at the time of the State Treaty meant some kind of ground-to-ground missiles, or something of that sort rather than anti-aircraft stuff. There was a lot of negotiation that never led to a great deal, but a lot of messages back and forth and consideration given to that kind of subject.

One of the things the new Kennedy Administration did that I was involved in at the beginning of my time on the Austrian Desk, they gave up the old NSC policy papers and developed a new series of operational guidelines that were to be State Department papers. Not through the NSC system, but would involve inter-departmental consultation and coordination. Al Wells had started drafting the Austrian operational guidelines before I took over the desk, but I finished them and coordinated them with the Pentagon and other government agencies. Those papers, instead of being discussed by the NSC, were then discussed and approved by the Policy Planning staff in the State Department. As it turned out the Austrian operational policy paper was the first one to go through the whole process and get approved. When I was called on to explain and defend this paper in the Policy Planning staff meeting, I found there were one or two people there, perhaps assigned the role of devil's advocate, I don't know, who argued against many of the points. Their principal argument was that the paper did not adequately reflect Austrian neutrality; that we were counting on the Austrians to be less neutral than they appeared to be on the surface. Such things as strategic trade controls, things of that sort, that we were counting on more Austrian cooperation than a strictly neutral position would seem to suggest. I was in a position of having to say, “Well, Austrian neutrality is defined by Austria, not by us.

Anything the Austrian government is willing to do, that they feel is consistent with their neutrality, why should we object to it? Why should we want them to be more neutral than they want to be themselves?" The paper was approved and became official U.S. policy.

After I had been on the desk for about a year and a half, I was invited down to call on Jova, who was still the chief of personnel operations, to tell me that by this time I had been in Washington for five years, longer than the usual Washington assignment for my grade, and I was scheduled for another overseas assignment. He was still grateful that I had stayed on for another nine months to provide some continuity when he was the new chief, so he was going to give me an opportunity to express a preference between two assignments. He said the number two political position in Vienna and the principal officership in Asmara, Eritrea were becoming vacant; which would I prefer? When I left Germany to come home after seven years in Europe, I did not expect to be going back to Europe again because it was the Department's policy to get experience in at least one other area. The job in Asmara was very tempting because it was known among Personnel insiders as one of the hidden "plums"...

Q: Nice place but also very important because of Kagnew Station.

SULSER: Yes, it was a nice place in Africa where the climate was decent because of the altitude. Here was the opportunity for a post of my own, an interesting place with a sizeable U.S. military presence. I had known one or two former principal officers in Asmara, who looked back on that assignment with fond memories. But Europe was the area of my greatest interest when I came in the Foreign Service, all my background there. Here was an opportunity that I felt I had wasted in my four years in Duesseldorf to really become proficient in the language. During all the time I was there I had sought out English-speaking contacts, and if I found a political contact could speak decent English I would speak English with him rather than improving my German. I had regretted that afterward and was happy at the Austrian desk to use some, or at least to read it. I thought here I've

had a year and a half on the desk, I know something about the country, the opportunity to go back there. Rightly or wrongly, I chose the Vienna assignment.

I went to Vienna on a five-year assignment, which was the way it was set up at the time. The Department was being chastised for moving people around too frequently, chastised by Congress for the cost of transporting officers and their families and their household goods. In posts that were not hardship posts and you were a middle-grade officer, you were supposed to be getting longer assignments.

Q: I remember seeing a report by Congress of how much it cost to move officers, and I was sort of appalled because I was on that list, I was going from Saudi Arabia back to Washington or something and it was expensive. Congress was looking closely at that.

SULSER: Oh yes, the Appropriations Committee was giving the Department a very hard time. They always wanted to know the average length of tours of duty, and the average was under two years and the cost of these transfers was astonishing. I never appreciated it myself and I'm sure you didn't either, how much it cost to move you and your family and your household goods and your automobile...

In any case, they were then setting up assignments in places like Vienna on a five-year basis. Three years, then home leave and back for two years. I went off happily to Vienna, and in one respect at least I lived up to my promise to improve my language ability. When I got to Vienna and began to make political contacts there, I never asked an Austrian whether he could speak English; I always spoke German, and this had a beneficial effect on my language. In fact, in a few cases when I'd have a visitor from Washington and wanted to introduce him to some of these political contacts, I was astonished to find after dealing with them in German for years that some of them spoke excellent English! But because I had approached them in German they spoke German with me.

We still had six officers in the political section, including one man devoted to refugee matters and one labor attach#, and I was the number two. My principal duty was contact

with the Socialist Party. After three years I had home leave. In the meantime, the Department had set up these counseling branches that you referred to earlier. For the first time I went around to Personnel and met with the head of the Mid-Career Political Officer Counseling Branch, who was Bob Houghton. He went over my record and said he thought it was a mistake to spend five years in a place like Vienna in a subordinate position because to become a senior officer you needed to demonstrate executive management experience; I shouldn't be going back, three years was enough. I said, “Well, I chose the post but I didn't make the decision to stay there five years. If you are able to get a different assignment for me, rather than going back, fine.” I never heard any more about that and went back. After I had been there another year, four years at that point, the political counselor, John Devine, left, and the Embassy suggested to the Department that I move up into his position. I was still an 03 and the position was an 02, and they said they had 02s that needed an assignment. They sent an 02 straight out of the National War College to be the chief of the section. That was Rollie White. I did the full five years as number two. Meantime, we lost a couple of positions, so it became a smaller operation. I had the pleasure of working almost those whole five years with Jimmy Riddleberger as Ambassador, who had succeeded Doc Matthews just before I went there in 1962. Shortly before I left, Riddleberger departed and Douglas MacArthur II arrived as Ambassador. He did not speak German, as Riddleberger had. Ken Sullivan, the labor attach#, and I were the best German speakers in the Embassy, so we took turns accompanying MacArthur on his calls around the city, introducing him there. Then I got notice I had been selected for senior training, and I did not try to get out of that as many had when I was secretary to the selection panel for senior training. I was allocated to the Air War College in Alabama; spent nine months there, my first civilian residence in a southern state, which introduced me to golf. When I got down there, I found there was nothing much to do outside of the school except hang out at the Officer's Club or take up golf, and I thought that golf sounded a little healthier.

Q: Let me go back to Austria. You were there from '62-'67. How did you find...you had the Socialist Party, were they out...?

SULSER: When I got there they were in that big coalition I mentioned earlier that divided up the government. The Chancellor was People's Party, Alphons Gorbach, and the Vice Chancellor, who was head of the Socialist Party, was Bruno Pittermann. The other Cabinet departments were divided up quite equally, with the Deputy being of the opposite party. It seemed to work very well and we were all of the opinion, as most of the Austrian leaders and opinion-molders, editorial writers, were, that this was a good thing for Austria. Given the pre-war, pre-Anschluss state of politics in Austria, when these parties were more identified with ideologies, they were literally at war with each other. Each had its own army, its own uniformed force, and did indeed carry out military operations against each other. The best way to prevent any kind of reoccurrence of this factional strife was to have the two major parties locked together in the government. This had been the pattern since the War ended in 1945. The Communist Party had been in the government briefly, until the first election, when they were virtually wiped out and left the government. By the time I took over the desk in 1961, there were no Communists in Parliament any more, and the only other party outside the government coalition, was the Freiheitliche partei, which was sort of the equivalent of the FDP in Germany, called in English the Freedom Party. The Freedom Party included some of the remnants of the old Austrian Nazi Party. It was a little, almost meaningless faction in the Parliament, which was made up 90% or more by the two major parties. The President of Austria had been a Socialist since 1945 and the Chancellor from the Peoples' Party. Even at that top level the jobs were divided, and it was everyone's opinion that that must be the way the Austrian electorate wanted it because they kept electing Socialist presidents and the Peoples' Party, the largest party in the Parliament, appointed the Chancellor. While I was there, the Peoples' Party won a majority of the Parliament for only the second time since the War and promptly set up a one-party government under Josef Klaus. The Socialist party went into opposition. This was something new and to some extent people worried about it, was this going to renew

the kind of factional strife they had had during the '20s and '30s? But in fact it didn't. It lasted for a few years and then the Peoples' Party lost their majority and went back into coalitions. In the meantime, the Freiheitliche partei, to some extent maybe because of age, some of their former Nazi people died off, they got younger leaders, although some of them are also extremely pan-German right-wing types too. But the Freiheitliche partei, to a considerable extent, has been rehabilitated.

It was an interesting situation there, and quite different from Germany. The different provinces in Austria had special political characteristics. The Socialist Party predominated the Burgenland, which had been part of the Russian occupation zone and was still the least developed, most primitive part of Austria, bordering on Hungary. If you went eastward from Vienna into the Burgenland, things looked different, looked poorer. Then you'd go across into Hungary, and that looked infinitely poorer than the Burgenland. The Austrians used to say that the boundary of Europe begins at the eastern boundary of Austria, and indeed there was a startling difference when you crossed the border. As poor as Burgenland was, it looked rich compared to Hungary in those days.

Q: How did you find the Austrians viewed the Soviet Union and its satellite neighbors at that time?

SULSER: I never met an Austrian who was friendly to the Soviet Union. They had bad memories of the Soviet occupation. The Soviet occupation zone was plundered for the benefit of the Soviet Union. All the Austrian industries were dismantled and hauled off to the Soviet Union. The Soviet regime there was extremely harsh and left a lot of enemies. As far as the neighboring East European countries were concerned, there was still a lot of nostalgia for the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austria, particularly the eastern parts of it, other than Voralberg, Tyrol and Salzburg Provinces, which are largely Germanic, the other provinces have very large Bohemian, Slovakian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian minorities.In the State Treaty and the other arrangements that were made to end the occupation, the Austrians were obliged to give considerable autonomy

to those East European minorities in Austria: to permit them their own schools and other cultural institutions; and the Austrians often held up their performance under those agreements as an example of how the Italians ought to treat the German population in the South Tyrol. You'd go from village to village in the eastern part of Austria, particularly in Burgenland, Steiremark (Styria), and Karnten (Carinthia), and villages would have different characteristics. One would be obviously Hungarian, one would be Slovakian, one Slovenian or Croatian in architecture, and had all their language schools, churches and whatnot. There were still a lot of personal and historical ties with the other East European countries. During the time I was there travel across what was known as the Iron Curtain increased considerably. Particularly from the neighboring countries. There was a lot of tourism from those countries into Austria, especially Vienna.

Every week I would call on the head of the press service in the Chancellor's office, who would review with me the communique issued after the Cabinet meeting, fill me in on the background of the issues that had been discussed and some of the personalities involved. This was a longstanding arrangement that went back through several of my predecessors at the Embassy. One day I was standing in front of the Ballhausplatz, as the Chancellor's office is called, which also houses the Foreign Ministry, waiting for an Embassy car to pick me up. One man with a camera came up to a policeman and asked if it was permitted to take a picture of the Ballhausplatz, because this was the center of the Austrian government and the scene of some famous incidents in the '30s, when Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered. The policeman looked at this man and said to him in German, “You must be from the east.” And the man said yes, he was from Hungary. The policeman said, “Well this is the free West and you can take a picture of any building you want here.” I thought this was an illustrative incident because here was this fellow from Hungary who was used to police controls and not supposed to take pictures of government installations; and here was this Austrian policeman who spoke in a very kindly way, using the familiar “Du” with this visitor, telling him: Look, this is a free country, you want to take a picture of the Ballhausplatz, fine!

Q: Did you have the feeling at the time that the CIA and the KGB were using Austria as their own personal sandbox, or something like that?

SULSER: Oh, definitely. Going back to the days of the “third man,” the occupation in Austria, when there were a lot of disappearances of agents and other people on both sides. This was indeed a battleground for intelligence agencies, and the Soviets used their long stay in Austria to develop background identities for agents operating all over the Western world. Picking up Austrian identities, some of which were genuine, people who had died in their occupation zone, and they would just take over their records, their names and so on to use as a basis for identities for their agents who would go out into other countries. There were not great Austrian targets for us or for the Soviets there, but there were the targets of other countries, third countries, to be worked on. This survived certainly as long as I was there. During that time too, one of our large FBIS monitoring stations in the eastern Mediterranean closed down and was moved to Austria.

Continuation of interview: July 7, 1994

Q: Jack, there were two subjects we mentioned, perhaps there is something else you want to mention about your time in Vienna, which was '62 to '67. First, was there any sort of tacit agreement, cooperation between Austria and NATO?

SULSER: The answer is not that simple. As far as I was ever aware, either as the officer in charge of Austrian affairs in the Department or as Deputy Chief of the Political Section in Vienna, a period that stretches over 6 and a half years, there was never any formal arrangement or exchange of information. But equipping the new Austrian army in 1955 and extending credit in 1962 on somewhat better than commercial terms to buy more U.S. equipment, especially tanks, indicates that the U.S., acting on behalf of NATO you might say but never with NATO as an organization, believed Austria would resist a Warsaw Pact incursion; and we wanted to assist and encourage them in this expectation. Of course, we expected Sweden and Switzerland would also, but we didn't assist them, because

they already had reasonably good military forces and had a tradition of neutrality. NATO planners would have taken this expectation into account, including an assessment of how effective Austrian resistance might be under two different circumstances, one being military action by neighboring Warsaw Pact countries without direct Soviet participation and the other with Soviet participation. I'm sure the assessment of Austrian effectiveness would have been very different in those two cases. But as far as I know there was no coordination between Austrian plans to resist and NATO plans, nor as far as I am aware any NATO plan to defend Austrian territory, although it seems to me in retrospect that it would have been logical for NATO to have at least a contingency plan to hold open the overland link between Italy and Germany via the Austrian Tyrol. If there was such a plan, I certainly never saw it or heard of it in those years from 1961 to 1967.

Q: Okay, the other one was talking about your ambassadors, Riddleberger and MacArthur.

SULSER: When I was on the desk, I had Doc Matthews, as I mentioned before. We only had telephone, telegram, and letter correspondence. I never dealt with him face to face. Almost the whole five years I was in Vienna I had Jimmy Riddleberger, who like Matthews was one of our most senior career ambassadors. He was very easy to work with, an absolutely delightful gentleman. He had almost his entire career background in that area. He had been in charge of Central European affairs in the Department, had been ambassador in Yugoslavia and U.S. representative to the Development Assistance Council, OECD, immediately before Vienna. He spoke German fluently, although like most of us learning it as an adult, he had an accent, but his language was perfectly capable to the job. His wife, who was born in Indonesia of Dutch parents, was bilingual in the language. Riddleberger customarily ate lunch in the staff canteen in the basement of the Embassy, frequently with his secretary, Francine Schaevaerts. There were usually two extra places at the table, and if you came in you were very welcome to join them and chat informally. He was very accessible, approachable.

Shortly after I got there and sized up the situation I decided I was going to take an interest in provincial affairs. Herman Schofield, who was also in the political section, had already staked out the Tyrol and Salzburg ski areas in Austria as he was an enthusiastic skier. He would combine ski trips with calls on the provincial officials in Innsbruck and Salzburg. The rest of the country was up for grabs. As a Political Officer I used to visit them, get acquainted with the provincial officials, governors of the various provinces, party leaders, editors, etc. I started within a few weeks getting out to those areas. Riddleberger, who had arrived a few weeks earlier, was also, as an old time Foreign Service officer, interested in getting acquainted with the rest of the country. I organized visits with Ambassador and Mrs. Riddleberger to several of the provincial capitals. I would spend two or three days at a time with them, and my wife, just the four of us, calling on provincial officials, organizing lunches, dinners, attending receptions given by those governments. I had more informal time with him than one would typically expect of an Ambassador. They were always so easygoing and very nice.

During Riddleberger's time there, he had one of the best boxes at the Opera House, and he was not personally interested in opera; so the seats in the box were available to the staff on a first-come, first-served basis. My wife and I were both opera fans. While I was on the desk, I had become friendly with the Austrian who ran their cultural information center in New York. Just before I went to Vienna he was transferred back as head of the Austrian Theater Administration, the Bundestheaterverwaltung. So I had an excellent contact to know what was coming up in the Opera, new productions, guest conductors and singers, long before they were ever announced in the newspapers. I would sign up for the box and when the special event was announced, other members of the staff would try to get seats only to find that Sulser already had the box booked! The arrangement was that if you were using it for representational purposes you couldn't be bumped. Otherwise, if you were just going on your own, there was kind of a sharing arrangement. It was understood that nobody would hog the box and even if you had reserved a seat for yourself and your wife, for example, and somebody else came along who hadn't been to the opera as recently or

as often as you had, they would ask you to step aside so that they could go. But for those special occasions I always arranged to take Austrian guests for representation purposes so I couldn't be bumped. As a result, we got to the Staatsoper very frequently. The first two years we were there more than 100 times, often more than two or three times in the same week. Riddleberger paid for the box on an annual basis. Once a year he would write a check for the whole thing, which was a very large sum, although prices then were a lot lower than they are today, and the people who used the box would only pay the pro rata cost of the seats. For the kinds of shows I chose to go to, the prices were always elevated because these were special events, new productions, first appearances of some famous singer. But we still paid the same rate every night all year around for the lowest priced performances. So that was a very nice arrangement. I think in the five years I was there with Riddleberger only once did he pre-empt me or anybody else from using the box because he suddenly had a visitor who was interested in going to the Opera.

When he would entertain a guest, just for a drink or something, to have a one-on-one conversation with some Austrian official as opposed to a big reception or dinner party at his residence, he was hesitant to ask people to come out to the Embassy residence in Hietzing, because it was out on the edge of town by Sch#nbrunn Palace. So he would use one of the apartments above the consulate, which was occupied by Ray Jones, a male secretary who had been with me in Duesseldorf and Vienna, initially as secretary to the chief of the political section. Then Ray moved up to be secretary to the DCM, which he remained the rest of the time in Vienna. Ray was famous in the Foreign Service for his art collection, his furniture, rugs and so on. He had a beautiful apartment, beautifully furnished. Riddleberger would use it to entertain people. Just an illustration of what an easy person he was to work for, and very likeable. But then his term expired and he came back to chair a career minister promotion panel for his last duty before retirement. He made a name for himself even in that respect. When the promotions to career minister were announced, he penned a letter to the Foreign Service Journal protesting because someone was promoted who had not been recommended by the panel. He and his board

had enforced the rules at the time, that to be eligible for promotion to career minister you had to have served overseas. There were a few people who were very senior in the Foreign Service as a result of the lateral entry “Wristonization” Program who never had served overseas. Joe Sisco was the person. The Secretary of State insisted that Joe Sisco should be promoted to Career Minister. Sisco was an extremely capable officer and held several top jobs in the Department in U.N. affairs and Near Eastern affairs as assistant secretary in both cases. But the fact was he never had an overseas assignment. Riddleberger felt that rules were rules. The Secretary of State put Sisco's name on the promotion list without the Board having recommended him, and Riddleberger made this fact public at the time.

After he left there were a lot of rumors about who might come to Austria. Bob Brandin was then the DCM, charg# during the interim. He and I and Ken Sullivan, who was then the labor attach#, were having lunch one day during this period in the staff canteen. Ken is given to very colorful language, a very outspoken fellow. We were discussing these rumors about who our next ambassador was going to be. Ken said, “Well, I don't give a ___ who it is as long as it isn't that *@*@*@ Douglas MacArthur.” Brandin looked at him and said, “If you're going to say things like that, I guess I better tell you that we have received a request for agr#ment (from the Austrian government, which of course hadn't been announced, was still a secret because they didn't have the Austrian reply yet) “for MacArthur.”

In due course we heard lots of stories about him and his wife, one of them from the wife of the British ambassador in Austria, who had been the British ambassador in the Philippines when MacArthur was ambassador to Japan. This good woman told my wife at a British Embassy party that they were saddened to hear that they were going to be in contact with the MacArthurs again, because when they were out there in the Pacific the Ocean was not big enough for the two of them even though they were not in the same country. People tell stories about the MacArthurs much more freely than I would expect. Much more freely than normal gossip.

Q: Well how did he operate and what were the problems?

SULSER: He was ambassador in Belgium when he was named to Austria. He had no background in the area, no knowledge of German. When we got a message from him about his arrival, they were taking the train from Brussels to Salzburg but wanted the Ambassador's car and driver to meet them in Salzburg instead of going all the way to Vienna on the train. The Ambassador's car was to be equipped permanently with a cooler to be kept stocked with a certain brand of champagne for Mrs. MacArthur. The cooler was to be maintained in the car, supplied with this brand of champagne at all times. When she was calling on foreign ambassador's wives or cabinet members' wives or going shopping or whatever, this brand of champagne was to be available in the car.

After they got established, she would occasionally have Embassy wives in for coffee. Coffee and orange juice and so on would be served to the wives, except Mrs. MacArthur who drank only this champagne.

As far as how he operated, with Riddleberger the regular Embassy staff meetings were such as I have experienced at other posts, where you go around the table and each one says what he is doing or what he is about to do, and the ambassador comments, gives guidance, reacts, whatever, to these things. The ambassador might also have something to say. But with MacArthur it was very different. We still had the regular weekly staff meetings, with most of the American staff there, but they were all lectures. He did all the talking. It would be based on information telegrams from the Department. Based on his experience as counselor of the Department, ambassador in Japan, ambassador in Belgium, he had a very wide-ranging experience, and he would educate us about the significance and implications of what was going on around the world. By the time he would finish his lecture it was already overtime and hardly ever was it necessary for anybody to say what he was doing yesterday or today or planning to do tomorrow as far as U.S. activities in Austria were concerned.

Another request of a personal nature he made when he arrived, he wanted to be outfitted with a proper hunting costume. This was one of his interests. He wanted to go hunting chamois in the Austrian mountains. I knew the largest clothing manufacturer in Austria socially, and we were very friendly with them. So I said, well I can take care of that, this factory manufactures every kind of clothing. I arranged for the Ambassador to go to the head of this firm and be measured for a proper Gamsjaeger outfit, which had to be in certain traditional colors. He got that done.

Since he did not speak German, when he would make his calls on Austrian officials, Ken Sullivan and I (the two best German-speakers in the Embassy) would alternate going with him on his calls. In my case, since I only overlapped with him for six weeks, was not very many. Ken was there at least a year, so he had a great deal more of that duty to do. It was a very different sort of atmosphere, a different relationship. He was much more formal than Riddleberger, much less approachable. He was even a little bit formidable. Not as much fun to work for. But my experience with him was brief and I was not very unhappy about that.

Q: Then you came back to Washington in 1967 and went to the War College for a year. Is that right?

SULSER: Yes, I went to the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. I was informed in Vienna that I had been selected for senior training. This was of interest to me, having been in a previous incarnation chief of the training assignments branch and the secretary of the senior selection panel. So I was pleased to find that I had been selected. They didn't announce for some time which school I was going to. From my previous contacts with the senior training system, I had the impression that the National War College and the Senior Seminar at the Foreign Service Institute were the two best, and of the service colleges, army, navy, and air, that the Naval War College was probably the best. Since my wife came from Massachusetts and the Naval War College is located in New London, Connecticut, I was hoping it would be that. Secondly, the Army

War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, because that was fairly convenient to Washington and to my family in Illinois and my wife's family in Massachusetts. The least desirable from that standpoint was the Air War College in Alabama, because that didn't relate to anything that fit with me and my family. But that's what it turned out to be. And it was, on a personal basis, a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

One of our neighbors and close friends in Alexandria during our first Washington assignment was the administrative assistant to Senator Sparkman. During the time that we were neighbors Helen and I would often be invited to functions where Sparkman was more or less obliged to take a whole table at various fund-raising affairs and things at which the President would often appear or participate, and some tickets would come down to us, so we were often in the presence of the Sparkmans, knew the family, that sort of thing. When we came back and my friend Lou Odum found that we were going to Alabama, where he came from and also the Senator, of course, he said, “Oh, well, you must let me fix you up with some friends in Montgomery.” So he proceeded not just to give me a list of names and addresses but to call these people and say, “My friends the Sulsers are coming down there and I want you to look after them.” They were politicians, lawyers, that sort of thing; Lou is a lawyer himself and he had friends in the legal profession and politics down there, including a couple of members of George Wallace's cabinet, since Wallace was governor. So we had an unusual time there, and in several respects it was almost like a foreign assignment. It was a part of the country that was foreign to us, and in addition to the activities at the War College, the lectures, the associations we had there, getting to know military students from all the services and civilians from other government departments and a few foreigners too, because there were British, Canadian, and Australian officers at the War College in those days, we had these local contacts as well. I would go around calling on these people just as I would call on contacts in overseas posts. It gave me an insight into southern politics, southern hospitality...

Q: Civil rights...?

SULSER: That's right, we had a few demonstrations and things there. The Selma march, things like that. I had as part of my duties in Vienna, as I had at other posts too, in London and in Duesseldorf, been involved in nominating people for the Leader Grant Program, the international visitors program. Politicians that we expected to become even more important in the future. Some of those I had proposed while I was in Vienna came to the United States on their trips while we were in Alabama. They included Montgomery on their itinerary because we were there. One of them was a man who was minister of education and head of the Socialist Party in the province of Styria. He was very interested in seeing the higher education system in the United States and of course in the South, the “separate but equal” system. While he was in Montgomery he visited Alabama State, which was the Black college located in Montgomery. I set up a dinner party for him with some of these local politicians, and he said he was surprised and impressed by what he saw at Alabama State because it was better than any university in Austria had to offer. He had expected it would be deficient in resources and facilities and such, but he found it to be a first-rate higher learning institution.

Q: While you were at the War College did you...I mean the Vietnam War was really at its height, a lot of it air. Two questions, how did they view somebody from the State Department and the Vietnam War and the other one was, did you find an Air Force state of mind that “air power can settle things?”

SULSER: Absolutely. That is the official doctrine of the Air Force and the motto of the Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, of which the War College is the topmost part. But they also have their command and staff college and their company grade officer course down there. Most of the academic programs, that is the in-service academic programs, are conducted there, and their purpose and motto is to demonstrate the decisive importance of air power, and to make of their students advocates of air power.

But as an ex-World War II infantryman who was on the ground both in combat and as a POW in Germany, underneath the air raids, I was not so impressed with air power and

had a good many lively discussions with my Air Force fellow students. Just as I did in college after the war talking with other veterans of World War II, many of whom had been in the Army Air Corps. I had digested the strategic bombing survey and used to quote quite readily from that, that indicated among other things that German war production continued to increase right up until March of 1945, only a couple of months before the war was over. German war production diminished after that only because the Air Corps declared that they had destroyed all the war production facilities in Germany and reluctantly turned their attention to hitting the trains and other elements of the transportation system in Germany and it was only then, when the output of the various factories could not get together to make the finished product that there finally were fewer airplanes, fewer tanks. Every Friday morning there at the Air War College we would have a big briefing on what the Air Force had done that week in Vietnam. Rolling Thunder was the big campaign, the B-29s flying out of Okinawa, the Philippines, wherever they were coming from, and dropping tens of thousands of tons of bombs on Ho Chi Minh trail. We'd get statistics on the tonnage that had been expended that week and that sort of thing. Occasionally they would show comparisons with World War II that demonstrated that many times the amount of ordnance was being expended in Vietnam as had been expended during World War II. And still the war seemed to be going against us all the time. I was there during the Tet Offensive, and we had speakers from Washington, from JCS and other parts of the Pentagon and the National Security establishment in Washington about the hundreds of thousands of additional troops that were necessary to accomplish the mission. It impacted on the personal level too, because the Air Force element of the student body, which being the Air War College was of course the largest part of the student body, was much smaller than it had been because McNamara said we can conduct the Vietnam War and all of our other activities without having recourse to a draft and without expanding pilot training, because statistically his systems analysts showed that the Air Force had all the pilots they needed to do all this stuff. Well, they were all needed in Vietnam and we had very few pilots at the Air War College. About the only pilots we had were a few people who had come off attach# duty in other countries, or off of desk jobs in the Pentagon, many of whom had not

flown combat aircraft in years, and they were just about the only Air Force pilots we had. We had an airfield that was full of airplanes, but every time we had to go somewhere as a student body, they had to bring in National Guard squadrons or Air Reserve squadrons to fly us there because there were no Air Force pilots in the student body. When we would make study trips, to Washington, for example to do research, planes were available but they were flown by the Navy, and Coast Guard and Army pilots who were in the student body there. The Air Force component of the student body was much smaller than usual and those that were coming out of non-flying jobs to attend there, every one of them had to go at the end of this course to Vietnam into a combat flying situation. All the students were full colonels or lieutenant colonels. Some of them had been in teaching assignments at the Air Academy in Colorado Springs or desk jobs in Washington, intelligence activities, for years, and had barely done enough flying to maintain their flight pay. Now they were going to have to go out there and fly combat missions as a colonel, a wingman, to some guy who is actually junior to him but had more combat experience; and a number of them perished when they got to Vietnam. They all, of course, had to go to reorientation, or refresher, courses after War College to get a couple of weeks experience on an F-4 when they had never flown anything hotter than a C-47 before. It was, from the personal standpoint, a very sad situation, particularly for the flying officers there. We had a lot of administrative people, logisticians, missile engineers, but pilots were in very short supply.

Q: Well then, you were assigned where?

SULSER: Since I had served only in Western Europe, the Personnel people told me policy called for me to be assigned to another area; and since I had been in subordinate positions abroad, in order to be promoted to senior rank—I was then an old-style FSO-3—that I would need to have some executive management experience. They were recommending that I be assigned as DCM in a small African Embassy. This would give me both management experience and the out-of-Europe experience. That was fine with me. But when it came time for assignments in the spring of 1968, the African Bureau decided to abolish the DCM position in many of those small embassies. They couldn't afford to

have a full-time deputy chief of mission as well as all the functional jobs. So much of the category of positions for which the career counselors had said I should be considered suddenly disappeared. Unlike my Personnel experience, when placement had been centralized in the office of Personnel, we were then in a phase when assignments had been decentralized again and were effectively determined in the geographic and functional bureaus. I got a call one day at Maxwell from the personnel officer in the European Bureau, Dudley Miller, who said he understood I was still available for assignment, and would I be interested in going back to London as political officer. I told him that while I would not seek any job in the Embassy in London, that London was a place I would never be able to turn down. In any case, I was not offered any alternatives. I learned later that Bill Galloway, with whom I had worked in Personnel and indirectly replaced in Vienna, was then deputy chief of the London political section and had requested my assignment.

So I went from the Air War College back to London for a second assignment, this time in the Political Section rather than the Consular Section. My principal duties were to cover the Labor and Liberal parties, and I was also to deal with the Foreign Office on Western European affairs, particularly Germany. I had various other internal political duties. I was the biographic officer and I was responsible for devolution, which was then a lively political subject in Britain. That was the effort to try and give Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland a little more autonomy from the central government. It didn't go very far. I also dealt with the Northern Ireland office. Shortly after I got there, that area exploded in the spell of “troubles” that lasted until now.

Q: What government was in power while you were there and how did you operate?

SULSER: Harold Wilson was Prime Minister, Labor, and when I went there David Bruce was Ambassador and Phillip Kaiser was the minister, the DCM. Kaiser had gone to Oxford with a number of people in the Cabinet, including Defense Minister Denis Healey and Home Secretary Jim Callaghan. He had also gone to school with Ted Heath, who was then Leader of the Conservative opposition. Kaiser was very generous in introducing me

to Callaghan and Healey and a good many others. I mentioned earlier that my mother had gone to High School with a man who was labor attach# in London during my first assignment. He had introduced me to a number of his trade union friends, one of whom at the time was number two in the Transport and General Workers Union. When I went back the second time, he had become General Secretary of the Labor Party, the top functionary. So I, too, had a longstanding contact and had stayed in touch with this gentleman. He introduced me to all of his subordinates in Labor Party headquarters, so I was off to a good start. I proceeded to build relationships with the British Labor Party officials and also with the Liberal Party. I went to their conferences and other meetings, spent long hours in their offices and in Parliament, entertained them and was entertained by them.

Q: How did you find...I mean we were right in the middle of the Vietnam War, and the Labor Party at that time had a very strong left-wing element to it, which obviously was not delighted about our involvement in the War, and also I take it was not fully behind NATO. Maybe I'm wrong, but how did you find that element of the Labor Party and what was our policy towards them?

SULSER: The Labor government, up until shortly before I went there in 1968 had been strongly supporting the U.S. effort, but they had backed off. There were very few in the top levels of the Labor Party by that time who would speak publicly or write in support of U.S. policy. Most of them were still sympathetic in private, and I guess their contribution to the Alliance then was keeping their mouths shut about their objections and letting the left fringe of the Labor Party do all the yakking on the subject. George Brown, who had been Deputy Leader of the Party, Minister of Economic Affairs and Foreign Minister, was one of the few who still would speak in the House of Commons or elsewhere, sympathetically about the U.S. and there were one or two Labor back-benchers who would speak in favor. I annoyed Ambassador Annenberg once in staff meeting by lamenting that only “has-beens” like Brown were still willing to speak out for us. He hoped that Brown's once great promise might still be realized, but it was my assessment that he was no longer going

higher in the Labor Party and not mainly because of Vietnam. I would have to say nine-tenths of the words uttered or written by people in the Labor Party about Vietnam at that time were critical of U.S. actions. There were plenty of demonstrations with thousands of people jamming into Grosvenor Square in front of the Embassy, and...

Q: I think about the future President of the United States, Bill Clinton.

SULSER: That's right, he was at Oxford at that time and, yes, we learned recently that he was apparently in the crowd. And hundreds and hundreds of policemen, of course. I would often go out and circulate on the fringes of those demonstrations just to get a personal impression of the kinds of people that were there and make some assessment of how organized these things were, how well they were led. On the fringes there were bands of skin-heads roaming around who would pick off stray demonstrators and beat them and kick them. I saw that happen. I don't think those skin-heads were supporting the U.S. in Vietnam, they were just taking an opportunity to beat up on the kinds of people, long-haired hippy types that they were in general opposed to. It was an interesting and exciting time to be there.

Q: Was there a problem with...I mean if they were speaking out against us, the War and all, what was the feeling in the Embassy and what was our policy, just to say well this is the way it is, pro forma protests, or explanations, or, how did you deal with it?

SULSER: Yes, I think that puts it as well as it could be. We did not have any trouble with the British government as such or with the Conservative opposition. The Embassy in general and USIS in particular tried to provide background articles about our policy in Vietnam and what we were attempting to do there, what our objectives and purposes were, the progress that was being made on pacification and all that kind of business. All the favorable aspects of our public policies to make those available to journalists, politicians and so on. We provided speakers whenever requested. But for the most part it was just something that you had to live through and survive.

Q: Were there any issues that you were involved in at the time aside from Vietnam, or were things on a pretty even keel?

SULSER: The Labor government's program to reduce the British military presence in the Middle East, South Asia and East Asia, we were constantly arguing against and trying to get them to maintain a healthy influence in those areas. We were accustomed to having them involved there, and we hated to see it diminish. We realized that their economic situation was such that they couldn't afford to maintain everything as it had been, but we kept hoping they would find ways to continue as much as they could. Their cooperation with us in those areas was very close. To some extent we were being sucked into the vacuum they were leaving so there was always a lot of coordination involved, using their facilities, taking over their facilities in some cases, using their presence and longstanding influence to assist us in negotiations with the host governments. The political-military cooperation was very close and extensive.

As far as Europe was concerned, there was the problem of the European Economic Community vs. the European Free Trade area, and the evolving British policy of European integration, the British role in Europe, which we had always hoped would continue to be a heavy one. We were also working on a new 4-power arrangement for Berlin. We always had close cooperation in the so-called Bonn Group, representatives of the U.S., British, and French embassies, with the German government involved, regarding the presence of foreign troops, German participation in NATO, and the status of Berlin. Occasionally the Bonn Group would escalate into the Ambassadorial Group, on which we were represented by the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Martin Hillenbrand, an old German hand. One of these Ambassador Group meetings took place regarding Berlin while I was in London. I was the Embassy backstopper for that, since relations with that part of the British Foreign Office was in my portfolio. Jonathan Dean was the political counselor at our Embassy in Bonn and our representative on the Bonn Group. If you've had any dealings with Jock Dean, you know he is one of the most prolific reporters the Foreign

Service has ever had. His reports of these Bonn meetings were always voluminous. They would be copied to the Embassy in London, and I would run over to the Foreign Office with them. Invariably, they would get reports of the Bonn Group meetings from me faster than they would from the British Embassy in Bonn. Even when they got the reports from their representatives in Bonn, they would be only a tenth as long and detailed as the reports I could supply them by Jock Dean.

When they had the higher level meeting in London with Marty Hillenbrand, Jock came over from Bonn to participate and suggested that we divide the reportorial duties. I did half the day and he would do half the day. I did the mornings and would go back to the Embassy and dictate what seemed to me a very long and detailed account of what had transpired. He would come in after the afternoon session and dictate several times as much. Then he would look over what I had done and add at least 50% more to what I had written. He was really phenomenal in that respect. Although he took some notes, they were by no means verbatim, and his reconstruction of the discussions was as close to verbatim as you could hope to get. Those discussions culminated shortly thereafter in the new 4-power Berlin arrangement that altered the situation considerably.

Q: In what manner?

SULSER: The relationship between Bonn and Berlin, between the Allied military commands and diplomatic missions in Berlin, access to the Soviet Zone in East Berlin, and protection for Soviet facilities in West Berlin. Many of the things that had been argued about over the 25 years since the War were then at least regularized.

Personally, during the whole three and a half years there, my time in grade in 03 since 1963 was getting longer, and I was concerned about my future. I was again in a subordinate political position, and Personnel kept telling me that to get promoted to Senior grades I would need to get some management position. I kept telling them, Fine, I didn't ask to come here any more than I asked to stay five years in Vienna. Finally, one day I got

a telephone call saying, “You really mean you're available to leave London?” I said, “Yes, I've been saying that ever since I got here.” They said, “Okay, we're going to assign you as charg# in Niamey.” I said, “Fine, that's okay with me.” I proceeded to get the post report and make arrangements to put our kids in boarding school.

Q: Niamey is where?

SULSER: It's in Niger, the former French colony just north of Nigeria, on the edge of the Sahara Desert, on the Niger River. I got the post report, which was very interesting reading and started to brush up what little French I had, and made arrangements to put the children in boarding school. A week later I got another call from Personnel saying, “Sorry, we're going to have to cancel that assignment because the Medical Division would not let your wife go there.” Just before we left Vienna in '67 she had some sort of medical problem that at first was thought to be a heart attack but then decided it was not, it was some sort of circulatory problem. Anyhow, the Medical Division said she could only go places with adequate medical facilities and that did not include Niamey. That was as close as I ever got to being assigned outside Europe.

The Assistant Secretary for Administration at the time, Frank Meyer, had been one of our Admin Officers in Vienna. Frank came to London regularly with Congressman Rooney who was Chairman of the State Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Frank Meyer had a bag of money to pay Rooney's bills as he went along, and look after him otherwise and try to cajole him into approving whatever expenditure Rooney's staff had told him should be dropped from the State Department budget. Frank, in his position, was able to see Selection Board lists, and he would tell me, “Oh yes, you've climbed up, you're within the promotion range.” When I got into the promotion range to make FSO-2, it was the year the budget was such that they only promoted a half dozen people into class 02, so that didn't work. Finally, after having made known to everyone I was aware of in the system back in Washington that I was available, I was not wedded to staying in London the rest of my life, I got a direct transfer to Frankfurt as Deputy Principal Officer. I have to

credit that to the late Elwood Williams, who was Mr. Continuity on the German desk for many, many years. Ever since my days as Political Officer in Duesseldorf, in the mid-'50s, Elwood had kept track not only of me but of anybody else who ever did political reporting out of Germany, kept track of their careers, and if he thought you did good work and had a contribution to make he would try to get appropriate assignments for you. He called to tell me that he had proposed to assign me back to Duesseldorf as Principal Officer, but that was a senior position and there were other senior officers with German experience who needed assignments. I didn't get that, but he was able to get me assigned to Frankfurt as Deputy Principal Officer by selling me to Bob Harlan, the Consul General there. I went on direct transfer in January of '72.

Before I left London I got a letter from Bob Harlan welcoming me to the post and describing what he wanted me to do, delegating certain areas of responsibility so that I would clearly have some supervisory and management responsibilities. I was not only to do the political work, but I was to supervise the Consular and Administrative sections and manage the very active junior officer rotation program they have in Frankfurt. He was giving parties to introduce me to various elements of the community in Frankfurt and had accepted on my behalf invitations that had come in even before I got there. When I looked at that list, I saw that virtually every night for the first month was occupied with parties of one kind or another. I thought, well, okay, this is my initial period, and it's going to slow down and be more normal, such as I had experienced elsewhere in the Foreign Service: that is, a couple of times a week you're either giving a party or you're invited to more or less official, representational activities. As it turned out, the social schedule got only heavier as the years went on in Frankfurt. It was far and away the busiest post I have ever experienced in that respect.

Q: Why would that be so? Frankfurt is basically a commercial area. The politics there are interesting but not of earthshaking consequence to our policy in Germany.

SULSER: Well, not earthshaking in terms of German—U.S. relations, but the provincial governments in Germany have a great deal more influence than, say, in Austria or England, the other countries I was familiar with. Not only do the representatives of the provincial governments make up the Upper House in Bonn, but the national governments draw on people from those provincial governments for Cabinet positions and elsewhere. We had three Laender in our consular district: Hesse, Rhineland-Pfalz and the Saarland, which meant some political travel and representational activity to deal with three Laender governments. We also had a quarter of a million U.S. forces in our consular district, which provided not only a lot of consular work, registering births of children born to our forces in Germany.

Q: I was baby-birth officer at some point, I think it was in '57, and I think I registered about 300 a month.

SULSER: Oh yes, it's a heavy duty, and the issuance of passports to our forces in Germany. In addition to that consular work, it involves a lot of dealing with the host communities, not only Laender but also municipal officials all over that part of Germany in the interest of maintaining a good atmosphere for our troops. By the time I was there, from January '72 until September of '75, there was frequent friction between local authorities and U.S. forces because of the growing need for housing and other facilities in Germany, with their growing population, expanding economy, and our holding on to vast training areas and airfields and barracks and storehouses. As you know, we keep the equipment for several divisions of troops to rush over from the U.S., that takes up vast areas in Rhineland-Pfalz and Saarland, all those airfields and stuff all over the place. We were constantly having to deal with these community relations problems occasioned by our very large troop presence in Germany.

The other element you referred to, the very large business community. This is the center of American business in Germany. The headquarters of the American Chamber of Commerce for Germany. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of American companies,

some of them large manufacturing plants, such as Opel, owned by General Motors, but many, many small companies. The business community was growing by leaps and bounds while I was there, with American banks coming in. Although Bob Harlan reserved to himself the management of the economic-commercial activities in the Consulate, there was still plenty of personal involvement on the social level for the Deputy Principal Officer. And then too, the huge consulate staff. When I went there in 1972, I was told by the Department that there were only ten U.S. embassies in the world larger than the Consulate in Frankfurt. One of those was Saigon, which closed while I was there, so I would assume there were nine embassies left in the world that had more people on the staff than the Consulate General in Frankfurt. While much of that staff was due to other agencies that were located there for two reasons—one because we had housing for them, as originally it was assumed that Frankfurt was going to be the headquarters of Western Germany, until Adenauer decided otherwise, so we had a very large housing area that was no longer needed just for the consulate staff. But it's also the communications and transportation center for Germany, so it was a very convenient place for other agencies to establish. The Federal Aviation Administration had a large staff there of 40 or so people with three aircraft kept out at Rhein Main Air Base. Their job was to maintain the navigation and communications facilities for U.S. Air Force in Europe, but also to monitor the navigational facilities used by U.S. civilian airlines all over the Middle East and Africa, as well. They flew aircraft to Berlin, England, all over West Germany and the rest of Europe, down to Greece and the Middle East, etc., in order to certify to U.S. airlines and the Air Force that navigational facilities were calibrated properly and functioning. The General Accounting Office had a staff of 50 or so there to do their thing all over the Middle East, Europe and Africa. The State Department Courier Operation maintains one of their two large overseas operations, one in Bangkok and one in Frankfurt, again with 40 or 50 diplomatic couriers based there traveling all over the Middle East, Europe and Africa. Other U.S. agencies of a smaller nature, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Customs Bureau, Immigration Service had two or three officers there and a local staff. It was a very, very large government community, and the business community, and the military community,

as well as German officialdom and politicians that were of interest to us. It kept us very busy. At the end of the first year I went through my calendar and found that we had averaged something like 5.3 nights a week involved in social activities. When I realized that, I made a point of keeping track every year; and every year it went up by a tenth of a point or two. By the time we left, it was virtually six nights a week we were busy, either entertaining or, more often, being entertained by different people, and very often two or three different functions in a given evening. Shortly after arriving in Frankfurt, I was promoted to 0-2 after nine years in grade, one year short of maximum time in class. Three years later, in 1975, I was promoted to 0-1.

I felt that my major contribution was in cultivating close contacts with politicians who later became more than they were when I was there. The head of the Christian Democratic Party from Land Hessen at the time, Alfred Dregger, was mayor of Fulda. I visited him in Fulda, had him in my home and visited with him in the Landtag at Wiesbaden. He later became Chairman of the Christian Democratic faction in the Bundestag. Helmut Kohl was minister-president of Rhineland-Pfalz. I became acquainted with him and he became head of the Christian Democratic Party, their Chancellor-candidate, and of course has been Chancellor for a good many years now. People in the Embassy didn't know him, and we got Ambassador Hillenbrand to come down to the Carnival parade in Mainz one year, mainly to meet Kohl, because Kohl always used to invite us to observe the Carnival parade with him. When he became Chancellor-candidate, I said to his chief of staff, whom I was very friendly with, “But he has no experience in foreign affairs, he's been a provincial politician all his life. Who is he going to have to inform and advise him on world affairs?” And he said, “As a matter of fact he has hired a young man out of one of the southern German university think tanks named Horst Teltchik to be his foreign affairs adviser.” So I said, “Okay, then I have to meet Horst Teltchik.” I arranged a lunch with Teltchik and we became very close; when Kohl became Chancellor, Teltchik became in effect his national security adviser. Before I left Frankfurt I saw to it that Teltchik was introduced to one of the political officers at our Embassy in Bonn, which had had no contact with

him up to that point. The head of the Socialist Party in Saarland, Lafontaine, I became acquainted with, cultivated him, and he became the Chancellor-candidate of the Socialist Party through a couple of elections, unsuccessful for them. That is the sort of thing, the contribution political contacts at provincial levels can make, to develop a pattern of contact, get acquainted with these people, write reports about them, do biographic assessments. When Kohl was making his first visit to Washington, I was then assigned in the Pentagon, and the person responsible for preparing psychological evaluations for the President tracked me down having looked in the records to read up on Kohl, people who had sent in memcons or biographic reports on him, and found me! I was the one who had written most about him, about his personality, his interests, his characteristics, and he tracked me down in the Pentagon and spent hours interviewing me in connection with a psychological assessment of Kohl for the President's use in his first meeting with Kohl as Chancellor. Those things we can do. But you're right, we were not negotiating any big U.S.-German deals or anything.

Q: Yes, but you're explaining very well what one does at that level besides the normal. Well then, you left Frankfurt in 19...?

SULSER: September, 1975, yes. The year before, in 1974, I was borrowed by the Inspection Corps. Ken Sullivan, who I mentioned earlier was with me in Duesseldorf and Vienna, was then in the Inspection Corps, was due to go out on an inspection team and at the last moment decided to take leave. Jim Sutterlin was then Inspector General and called Bob Harlan in Frankfurt and asked if he would let me go on detail to fill out this inspection team. Bob said fine, if Jack is willing and interested in doing that. Then Sutterlin called me, and I said, “Sure, as long as Bob okays it, it's fine with me.” I didn't participate in the briefing of the inspection team in Washington. I went directly from Frankfurt to Beirut and joined the team there, inspected the Embassy in Beirut, the Consulate General in Jerusalem, the Embassy in Tel Aviv and the embassies in Amman and Damascus. I was gone about two and a half months, the only official duty I was ever called on to perform outside of Europe. I found it a very interesting experience, but professionally a frustrating

one, because it seemed to me the Department was expecting the inspectors to do more than they were capable of doing: to put themselves in the place of the policy formulators in Washington, from the President, National Security Council, Secretary of State on down. The inspectors were supposed to go in and evaluate whether U.S. policy and objectives were appropriate and realistic, whether the resources devoted to achieve those objectives were adequate, and so on. When I was leaving Frankfurt a year later, Bill Schaufele was Inspector General, whom I had also known in the past. He called and said he wanted to assign me as a senior inspector to head an inspection team full time. I asked him if the program was the same as the year before and said I didn't think inspectors from various backgrounds were really in a position to second-guess the policy makers in Washington. If that was still to be the principle objective of the inspections, I didn't feel I could do this adequately. So that offered assignment didn't materialize. Later I got a call from Bob Houghton, who had been my career counselor way back in 1955 when I came on home leave from Vienna; he was now the chief of the senior officer assignments branch in Personnel and wanted me to join him as his deputy. That's what I did my second time in Personnel.

Q: You were there '75 to '77. How did the Senior Officer assignment system work in this period?

SULSER: I kept comparing it with my previous experience in Personnel, 1958-'61, when Personnel authority was centralized and I had gotten a lot of satisfaction out of realizing I was doing something that mattered in the Foreign Service and participating in group decisions that in nine cases out of ten, or maybe even 95 out of 100, actually determined assignments. When I came back to Personnel in 1975, they had just launched what has been known ever since as the Open Assignments System. Personnel was organized on a different basis, by ranks; a junior officer branch, a mid-career branch, and a senior assignments branch. We dealt only with senior officers; in my previous experience, a geographic branch or the training branch, you would deal with people of all ranks. I found the Open Assignments System, at least as it operated at the senior level, to be ineffective,

to say the least, from the standpoint of officers needing assignment and extremely frustrating for the people who were charged with administering it. Perhaps it worked better at the junior or mid-career levels, I really couldn't tell. The placement panel I had enjoyed so much, the give and take during my previous assignment there, functioned entirely differently. The assignments were determined outside the panel; the panel was only for the purpose of recording those assignments. You'd just go in and say, “We are assigning so and so to such and such position.” There was no discussion, no arguing, no rationale, no chance to comment or pick it apart because the other members of the panel dealt with personnel of other ranks.

Q: Well where was the decision made?

SULSER: The decisions were being made effectively in the bureaus. In the senior assignments branch we were responsible for circulating the lists of vacancies coming up and recording the desires of the officers based on the vacancies coming up in the time they were eligible for transfer. We'd get wish-lists from people based on these lists of pending vacancies. But any time we tried to make assignments on that basis that were not acceptable to the bureaus concerned, they would just run to our higher authorities and say, “Oh, your people want to assign so and so the job, but I want this person.” Which meant the old-boy network was rampant. We talked about that in my earlier PER assignment when you questioned the extent of personal involvement and old-boy system that I believe operated at a minimal level in those days. Now it was virtually the entire system at the senior level. It was almost impossible for us to assign someone on the basis of what we thought was a sensible assignment, because the bureau wanted the people they wanted; the people they knew. The assistant secretaries had no hesitation to run to Carol Laise, who was then the Director General of Personnel, and say, “It's impossible for me to operate the bureau unless I have so and so instead of the one your flunkies down the way want to assign.” She had no desire to quarrel with these people; they were her

opposite numbers at the top ranks of the Department, and I never knew her to stand by her staff rather than the...

Q: It must have been very frustrating.

SULSER: It was, extremely so. About the only thing that was like the old days in Personnel was the fact that this was expected to be only a two-year assignment. At the end of those two years Bob Houghton was leaving, and the head of Foreign Service assignments then, Carl Ackerman, whom I got on very well with, wanted me to stay on as chief of the branch. I said, “No way, thank you; the only reason I've been able to maintain my sanity in this job is that you and Bob Houghton are between me and the top levels. If I had to deal with this face-to-face, I don't think I could take it.”

In the meantime, we had all these officers coming in who had asked for assignments who were mystified as to why they were never getting anything that they asked for. It was very hard to deal with, to tell your fellow officers that you were powerless to do anything. Not only to give them the jobs that they had expressed an interest in, that were available, but really to give them much of anything.

Q: What would you do? Tell them that they really had to go to the bureau that they were interested in.

SULSER: Finally, if they persisted, you would have to tell them, “Frankly, I think you would be well advised to pursue your interest through the bureaus where you are known. Try it that way.” I could see the list of over-complement officers growing steadily. When I was in Personnel the first time, there were always a few officers who were difficult to place. We would convene a special panel, after normal hours, or at least we would start late in the afternoon and stay until late at night, gather the executive directors of the various bureaus and say, “Look, here is a list of people who need assignments, and we have to assign them.” At the end of that evening, before anybody could leave, that list had to be eliminated. The bureaus knew that they would have to take their fair share of these

people. The European Bureau, being the largest, had to take more than anybody else. There were no long-term over-complement officers. But in the Open Assignment System the list of over-complement senior officers kept growing and growing. I got very concerned about this and did a memorandum which passed up the line, about how this had grown from month to month and what the causes of it were. In addition to the one I mentioned —inability to assign people—it was obvious that one of the principle causes was the so-called “stretch” assignment, where the bureaus were not only asking for senior officers of their choice to fill these posts, but were moving mid-career officers into senior positions, so that there were fewer and fewer senior vacancies available. Well, my memo had little impact. Carl Ackerman told me he had read it with interest, but when he had discussed it with his superiors, they didn't think it was a serious problem. About a year later, after I had left Personnel, I got a call from Carl Ackerman to say my memorandum had been resurrected and people were now very concerned. I gather the problem has not diminished in the years since then. I keep reading in the Foreign Service Journal and elsewhere about the problem of unassigned senior officers walking the halls, trying to find meaningful work to do on a temporary basis.

Q: Is there anything we've talked about so far that you wanted to add to?

SULSER: You had asked me about Austria being an East-West intelligence battleground, and I thought later about one incident when the Austrian government passed a law making it a crime for Austrian citizens to work for foreign intelligence organizations. Within days after that law took effect, all the local employees in our Army and Air Attach# offices got new personnel action forms telling them that they were no longer employed by the Army or Air Force, but by the Defense Intelligence Agency. The defense intelligence system had been reorganized and brought under DIA instead of the individual services. So we had a little flap there, had to straighten it out, since we had just made all our local employees criminals by assigning them to the DIA.

I was in Vienna when President Kennedy was killed; it was late Friday when we got the news so we decided that a small group of people from each section would get together on Saturday morning in the Embassy at 8:00 to plan how we were going to manage memorials, condolence book and so forth. I got down there at 8:00 on Saturday morning. The Embassy was closed, but there was already a line more than a block long of people wanting to come in and sign a condolence book. That line was headed by the then-President of Austria, Adolf Schaerf, who was standing there in the line waiting to come in the door at 8:00 on a Saturday morning to sign a condolence book. Later, two of the Kennedy sisters, Pat Lawford and Jean Smith came over to Vienna to see the places their brother had been when he was there for the summit with Khrushchev. I had the pleasure of escorting them around for a couple of days, taking them to those places, plus they also wanted to see a school or clinic for retarded children. It was one of the Kennedy family interests as a result of sister Kathleen. I made some inquiries and learned about a very interesting place of that sort and took them there. They were very impressed by it, by the director, the doctor who ran this clinic, an Austrian physician. This clinic became one of the regular institutions supported by the Kennedy Foundation.

Commenting on the work of an Austrian Desk Officer, I told you about the limited extent to which I was involved in the logistical planning for the summit in Vienna, but I never, either as officer in charge of Austrian affairs or deputy chief of the political section afterwards, saw any record of those conversations with Khrushchev until last year when I was reviewing materials at the National Security Council for publication in the Foreign Relations of the U.S. volumes put out by the historian's office. I finally got to read all these memcons of conversations between Khrushchev and Kennedy, 30 years later.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to add on what we've covered? We will start eventually on '77-'78 in London.

SULSER: We were talking last time, I think when the tape was not running, about the lack of a send-off in the Foreign Service when you leave. If you are being sworn in as

Ambassador or Assistant Secretary, they have a very nice ceremony, the family comes and your friends are invited and they have the chief of protocol giving you the oath and all this kind of stuff. But when you leave the Foreign Service, no one even says good-bye or thank you or anything. I think for the most part you have to get your satisfaction out of various things that happened, that you did, or the experiences you had. For me, as I've mentioned before, one of the most satisfying things was getting to know people at an early stage of their career, recognizing them as people with potential, and then seeing that happen. The satisfaction that you get from knowing that you knew the prime minister, the foreign minister, the president, whatever, when he was a young person about your own age. That certainly happened to me in England, Germany, Austria, and to a lesser extent in Holland; I suppose because that was my last overseas post and I was senior myself, so the people I dealt with were already senior. But in Austria, for example, where my major responsibility was covering the Austrian Socialist Party and developing contacts there, among the very good friends I spent time with, not just on duty but on weekends and traveling, going around to wine cellars and restaurants very informally, was the Secretary of the Socialist Party in Burgenland, the easternmost province bordering Hungary, and two young fellows in the Socialist Parliament faction office, a secretary and an assistant secretary of the Socialist group in the National Parliament. And 15 years later the fellow from Burgenland (Sinowatz) was Chancellor, and the former secretary of the National faction (Gratz) was Foreign Minister and his former assistant (Fischer) was the Minister for Science and Research; and they were respectively Chairman and Deputy Chairmen of the Socialist Party. That is a good, fun thing. When I was in Duesseldorf, I read one day that the Catholic Youth Organization had chosen a new chairman. That organization was headquartered in Duesseldorf, so I went around to meet this fellow. Heinrich Koeppler was his name. Fifteen years later he was Minister-President of Rhineland-Westpfalz and the CDU Chancellor-candidate. He told me he remembered me as the first American he ever met. Unfortunately, he died before he could become Chancellor. He was succeeded as Chancellor-candidate by Helmut Kohl.

In Frankfurt, I noticed one day that the Socialist Youth Organization had elected a new headperson. A woman had had that job before, named Heidi Wieczorek-Seul, she was a wild radical. I never had any dealings with her. She certainly never gave the impression she would be accessible to any Americans at the height of Vietnam and what all. But here was a new person on the scene, so I thought I'd give him a try. It was a clean slate as far as I was concerned. He was very cordial on the telephone, but when I suggested getting together for lunch or coming to see him in his office or something he said, oh no, that his board at the Socialist Youth Organization would never understand his meeting with an American official because of Vietnam. He said he wouldn't mind if I called him on the telephone from time to time. So I had fairly regular telephone conversations with him about things that were going on in Germany and his attitude, about the U.S. etc. After we withdrew from Vietnam in 1975, he was perfectly ready to meet with me and did often. At that time I was running a sort of school for our junior officers and our whole economic-commercial staff, which was our major operation in Frankfurt. We had a Trade Center putting on exhibits for the whole of Germany. Shortly before that the staff had turned over, completely. All the Americans who had been there were old German hands, knew their way around, spoke the language. Suddenly, we had a new crew who had never been in Germany before. So the Director asked if I could run a seminar for his staff to teach them about Germany. I started regular Friday afternoon classes, if you will, not only for the economic-commercial staff but for the first tour junior officers that we always had on a rotation program. After my own series of lectures about the German government, the political parties, the pressure groups that operated in politics there, I started bringing in outside speakers, including the head of the Socialist Youth Organization. That was Karsten Voigt, who is now the SPD Foreign Affairs spokesman in the Bundestag. That was another very pleasant experience.

In London, in the '68-'72 assignment in the Political Section, there were a couple of things I didn't mention before. A month after Nixon became President in 1969, he came to London. Embassy officers were assigned different events on his program. One of the events I

was assigned was the very first one on the program, his arrival at Chequers. I think it was on a Sunday, so Harold Wilson was at the Prime Minister's country place at Chequers. Ambassador Bruce went to the airport along with Foreign Minister Stewart to meet the President and bring him to Chequers. The Prime Minister and I were at the front door, waiting for the President. Henry Kissinger was with him, and Ronald Nessen, and the White House doctor; all the rest of the President's party went straight into town to the hotel to get themselves established. We had our discussions out there, which was very pleasant, a nice supper and everything. Before the President left, he and Wilson went into a room for a private conversation, and Kissinger and Nessen and the Ambassador and I were parked in an anteroom someplace. The journey into town, of course, was all arranged; so and so was riding in this car and that car and so on, a whole caravan of cars. The Ambassador was supposed to ride into town with the President. Instead, when Nixon emerged, he piled into the limousine and Kissinger and Nessen piled in with him. The Ambassador was left standing on the doorstep, along with Wilson and myself. Of course, I had an Embassy car and driver who had brought me out to the place, so I gave the Ambassador a ride back into town.

Nixon had other appointments at the hotel. They took one whole floor of the Claridge Hotel, a block from Grosvenor Square. We brought in the head of the Conservative Party, Ted Heath at the time, and the head of the Liberal Party, Jeremy Thorpe, for private conversations with the President in his hotel. A White House photographer would take pictures of them when they arrived, shaking hands with the President, sitting down to begin their conversation. When it came Thorpe's turn, the White House photographer was missing, and Thorpe was very keen to have his picture taken with the President. While he was chatting with Nixon, I went dashing around the hotel looking for the photographer. Never did locate him. Thorpe's time with the President was up, and he had to leave because the next appointment was following on. He was very upset that he had been denied an opportunity for a photo with the President. Later that day when I reported this to Ron Spiers, who was Political Counselor, he said he'd take care of it. He got one of the

White House staffers to agree to have Nixon sign a photo for Thorpe. It arrived a couple of weeks later, and I took it over to the House of Commons. I walked into Thorpe's office, and there on the wall was a photo apparently of him with the President in the room at the Claridge Hotel, identical to photos I had seen of the President with other people. He confessed that he had borrowed a photo from someone else who had had an appointment and had a picture of himself superimposed on it so it looked as though he had had a photo with the President! Which he should have had. Shows the ego of a politician who wants to be photographed with the President, and how a personally autographed photo with “To my dear friend Jeremy Thorpe” written on it was a poor second to what he had managed to fake for himself.

It was during that assignment, too, that the Labor Party was tossed out of office, in the elections of '70 or '71, and the Conservatives came in. Ted Heath was now Prime Minister. Secretary of State Rogers came to London to attend an annual conference of the American Bar Association. While he was there, he wanted to have a talk with the Prime Minister. It was a weekend, so Heath was at Chequers. Since I had become “Chequers attach#" in the Embassy, I took Secretary Rogers out there on a Sunday afternoon to meet with Ted Heath and the Foreign Secretary, Alex Douglas Home. Because it was a weekend, an informal occasion and everything, I took my own camera along. I took snapshots of Heath and Douglas Home greeting Secretary Rogers. Heath and Rogers went inside to have a private chat, while Douglas Home and a couple of people from the Foreign Office and I sat out in the garden, because it was a lovely summer afternoon. I took some more pictures of Douglas Home and others out there. Pretty soon, one of the staff came out of the house and said the Prime Minister wanted me to come in and take some photos of him with Rogers since there was no British official photographer present. I went in and took pictures of Heath and Rogers together, finished up the roll of film. Next day I took it to be developed; went back to pick up the prints a couple of days later, and there was nothing. Something had gone wrong with the camera. There was not one useable picture. Nothing. For days after that I kept waiting for the telephone to ring,

somebody from Number 10, saying that the Prime Minister would like to have copies of those photos. But they never did call, so the incident just passed off. I had no souvenirs to show for it and was not subject to the embarrassment of being asked for photos that I couldn't produce. I promptly got rid of that camera and bought a much simpler one.

In senior officer Personnel, in '75-'77, I mentioned before the frustration I felt trying to get anything done or any feeling of satisfaction as compared to my previous assignment in the old-fashioned Personnel Operations Division. The introduction of the so-called Open Assignments System in 1975 was supposed to be accompanied by a re-establishment of PER's central authority. PER was supposed to have the final say again, except that Ambassadors and Assistant Secretaries could veto assignments of their immediate deputies and their personal secretaries. In practice, they were given their choice for those positions. Other senior officers were supposed to be chosen by the office of Personnel in consultation with the Bureau concerned. In other words, section chiefs in embassies we could assign without the ambassador's concurrence and office directors or assistant directors in bureaus without the concurrence of the bureau. After due consultation, of course. In fact, as far as the bureaus were concerned, it did not work that way. Any time we tried to assign a senior officer to a bureau that the bureau had not suggested itself, the assistant secretary would run to the Director General, and we would have to undo the assignment and put in whoever the bureau wanted. It worked better overseas, in that we could assign principal officers at constituent posts and section chiefs in embassies without running into much trouble. As a result, the three of us who manned the senior assignment branch at the time were personally affected. Bob Houghton had mostly Middle East background and was assigned to Istanbul as principal officer. Frank Starrs had served in Spain, spoke Spanish, and was assigned to Mexico City as Political Counselor. The job that I coveted, since I was completing only two years in Washington and expected to stay longer, was the Director of the Office of Central European Affairs—Germany, Austria, Switzerland. But the European Bureau wanted Bill Woessner, who was then political counselor in London. Woessner had succeeded me in London in '72 as the officer covering

the British Labor Party and had moved up in '76 to be Political Counselor. The bureau brought him back to be the Director of Central Europe. I declined Carl Ackerman's offer to stay on and run the senior assignments office. On the pattern of these other assignments, Ackerman told me one day he had consulted with the European Bureau and it was okay with them that I go back to London as Political Counselor. That's how that transpired.

Q: You were there from '77 to '78.

SULSER: There were two things we did in that senior assignments office that I didn't mention. After Carter became President, he set up an ambassadorial screening panel chaired by Warren Christopher, who was then the Deputy Secretary. This panel, which included non-governmental people as well, was supposed to assure that the best qualified candidates were chosen for ambassadorial posts. Our office acted as secretariat for this screening committee in that we wrote up the resumes of the candidates. At the beginning we were invited to suggest people we thought should be serious candidates for ambassadorships, but Houghton and Starrs and I soon found that that didn't cut much ice. The names we suggested never seemed to make it onto the lists of people we were told to prepare resumes on. The panel met more or less weekly, so each week we would get a list of names we were supposed to write up for various, specific ambassadorial vacancies. We were to emphasize their abilities, experience, management, creative skills, policy innovativeness and all that kind of thing, and to make each one appear to be the obvious, ideal candidate for post x, whatever might be on the agenda for that week. There were a number of people who were obviously favorites of higher ups in the Department, Carol Laise or assistant secretaries around the place, who appeared and reappeared on these lists all the time. If they would fail to be selected for post x, they would appear next week on the list of candidates for post y. We had to rewrite the resume to make them sound like the absolutely right choice for post y or post w or post z, and so on.

The other regular piece of work we had to do was to prepare a written report monthly, to Carol Laise, on women officers who had been assigned during the month to what

were called “key” positions. Those were identified as DCMships, deputy assistant secretaryships, principal officerships, office directorships. She was keen to make sure that women were given opportunities. This was apart from the Open Assignment System. It didn't matter whether these women had asked for these jobs on their bid lists or not, or even whether they were completing their current assignment

When I was due to leave Frankfurt in the summer of '75, the political counselor in Bonn was transferred to a DCMship in Austria or Hungary, and Ambassador Hillenbrand asked the Department to transfer me to Bonn as his political counselor. But the Department came back and said I had been at that stage over three and a half years in Germany, four years without home leave and that to remain another assignment in Germany would be contrary to Personnel policies. Besides, we had just withdrawn from Vietnam and they had several senior German-speaking officers who had served in Vietnam or on the Vietnam Task Force in Washington who needed assignment, and one of those (Dick Smyser) was being assigned as political counselor. Hillenbrand went back and said, “Okay, then extend Sulser for a year, move him up to be Principal Officer in Frankfurt,” because Bob Harlan, the Principal Officer, was transferred that summer too. The Department came back with the same reasoning, and in fact Wolf Lehmann, who had been the last DCM in Saigon, was transferred to Frankfurt as the Principal Officer. So two jobs I could have moved up to, aspired to as a new 01, were taken by officers who became available because of our withdrawal from Vietnam. I declined the Inspection Corps and wound up in Personnel, when Bob Houghton called and asked me to work with him in Senior Assignments.

Q: So then we move to London. Who was ambassador when you moved to London in '77?

SULSER: Kingman Brewster.

Q: What was his background and how did he operate?

SULSER: He had been the head of Yale University, president, I guess he was called. By coincidence his resume for the Court of St. James was one of those I had written up for

the Ambassadorial Selection Panel. Of course, I did my best to make him sound like the absolute ideal candidate for ambassador to Great Britain. I'm absolutely sure my resume had nothing to do with his selection. The key factor was that he had been a roommate, in college or in law school, of Cyrus Vance, who was then the Secretary of State.

Brewster was selected as Ambassador and came in to see Bob Houghton and me about the candidates for his DCMship, the minister, in London. We had prepared a good list of candidates, some of whom we had chosen, some of whom had been proposed by the European Bureau. He had talked to Art Hartman, the Assistant Secretary for Europe, who had supported the candidacy of Ed Streator, who was then the DCM at our Mission to NATO, in Brussels. Because of the European Bureau's recommendation, Streator was on our list of candidates too. We spent an hour or so with Brewster in Bob Houghton's office going through the files of all of these candidates. To no one's surprise, he chose the one that Art Hartman had recommended to him, Ed Streator. As Brewster was leaving our office he said, “I understand I'll be needing a new Political Counselor as well because the fellow there is coming back to the Department.” I said, “Yes, Mr. Ambassador, we'll take care of that in consultation with the European Bureau.” In the end I got assigned to the job myself, and that proved to be the biggest disaster of my Foreign Service career.

It got off to a very bad start. Brewster arrived in London a couple of months before I did, and Streator arrived a couple of weeks before I did. One of my first days there, Streator met with me and the head of the Economic Section. He said that when he was DCM in the U.S. Mission to NATO, nothing went out of that Mission without him personally approving it. He realized that in London the reporting volume was too extensive to require anything like that, but he wanted to know what was in preparation. If there was a report being planned that he was interested in, then he would get involved. He intended to meet with me and the head of the Economic Section every day for us to tell him what our staffs were planning to report about, what approach we were taking, sources, why we were doing this, how we were planning to handle it, etc. Every day we'd meet with him and report what our staffs were planning. He would occasionally suggest a subject he thought worthwhile.

Only very rarely would he ask to see something in draft. More often he would ask to see it in final before it went out. At the end of this first conversation he looked at the Economic Counselor and me and said, “If you don't like doing things this way, Ambassador Brewster will use his personal connection with Secretary Vance to get you transferred.” Just like that. Neither the Economic Counselor nor I had expressed any objections or reservations.

Q: It's standard operating procedure to do it.

SULSER: Not unusual, I guess. Certainly nothing like that happened with Jimmy Riddleberger in Vienna. He was not concerned on a daily basis with reporting, nor his DCMs either. But, okay. Before we even had a chance to express our views on it, he threatens us with transfer if we didn't like doing things that way. Also, at Streator's suggestion, the Ambassador met with what you might call the Country Team on a daily basis. Streator said that he had suggested to the Ambassador that since he was new to this business, to begin with at least, instead of having weekly staff meetings he might like to meet every day and have a closer idea of what was going on in the Embassy. So every morning at 9:00 this small group of 10 or 12 people would meet with the Ambassador. We'd go around the table and report what was going on, what we were planning to do for the day, what our staffing situation was, things like that, whatever we wanted to mention. At the end of that meeting the Economic Counselor and I would adjourn to Streator's office and we'd have our session on reporting subjects. These daily meetings with the Ambassador went on every day the year I was there. He never did get to the point when he might go back to the usual practice of weekly staff meetings. The number of people participating in these daily meetings grew. Pretty soon we were 15 or 20 people meeting every morning, including members of the Economic, Political and USIS sections, rather than just the section chiefs.

The first time the Ambassador asked to see me, not long after I got there, he called me to his office. He was there with Will Ito, his junior staff aide, a first-tour Foreign Service officer who had been in the Political Section for a while, and was now working out of the

Ambassador's office. The Ambassador wanted to know what my plans were for realigning the reporting responsibilities in the Political Section to benefit what he called “some real hot shots.” He mentioned Bob Blackwill, who was dealing with Western European affairs, and Jack Binns, who was in my old job, covering the Labor Party, and Ray Seitz, who was covering Africa and the Conservative Party. The Ambassador wanted to have their workloads lightened so they could concentrate more on these particular subjects, which he thought to be of key importance. I told him I had several ideas for accomplishing that, but Seitz and Blackwill were both in the U.S. on home leave and Binns was on extended local leave. I hadn't even met them yet. It amounted to an instruction to let these favored three do only what they wanted, and the other six political officers should take up the slack. I responded to the Ambassador that I wanted to talk with these members of my staff personally about my ideas before I made any decisions. That was all there was to that “private” conversation.

These daily meetings with the Ambassador were very strange, in that in my recollection he never once responded to anything that was said by any of the people around the table. He would occasionally ask a question, but he would never indicate whether he agreed with what was being said or planned, or disagreed, or whether he had some idea about how whatever subject was under discussion should be approached or handled. Never any kind of a response that indicated how he felt or what his desires were on any of the things that were discussed there. As far as I was concerned, there was a complete lack of communication, any kind of guidance or real dialogue at all.

Having served in London twice before I knew a lot of people in the Labor and Liberal Party in the British government who were then in higher positions than when I had first known them. The Ambassador being new to this business and Streator being new to Britain, I was concerned that I should not try to appear as the know-it-all and say I, I, I all the time, that I knew this guy and that guy and therefore should be kingpin. I tried to play a low-key role, concern myself with what the Political Section was doing and help them with their reporting, get stuff out on time. At one of the very first conversations with

Streator, he said he hoped I didn't mind that he and the Ambassador liked to deal directly with members of my staff. Although Woessner had warned me, stupidly, I didn't object. I figured, it's their Embassy, these people are on their staff, if they want to deal directly with people that are handling subjects of interest to them, I certainly couldn't stop them. I suppose in hindsight what I should have done was tell the members of my staff that if they saw the Ambassador or Streator they should tell me about it. I didn't do that either. Luke Kinsolving, who covered the Middle East, was the only one who ever made a point after being asked up to the front office of coming in and telling me what had transpired. Blackwill and Binns and Seitz never did. These four were up and down the hallway to Streator's or the Ambassador's office quite regularly. My door was usually open, and I saw them parading up and down there a lot.

A couple of times early on Streator, in making his calls on ministers and junior ministers in the government, had asked me to go along with him. On the way I would tell him what I knew about these people, their background, their interests and so on, without saying I've known this guy for years and he's a friend of mine, or anything like that. We'd arrive at the office, be ushered in and I'd be greeted very warmly on a first-name basis which kind of embarrassed me. I don't know how Streator felt about it, but after that happened a couple of times he stopped asking me to go with him.

So it was not a very harmonious situation. My first assignment in London, in the visa section, I had thought, gee, if I were in the Political Section I'd have some idea of what was going on in this huge Embassy. Then the next time I was in the Political Section, and I thought, Boy, to be head of the Political Section I'd finally know what was going on at the top levels of this place. The third time I was head of the Political Section, and despite these daily meetings with the Ambassador and the DCM I still didn't feel I was in any way privy to their concerns or their political activities. EXDIS and NODIS telegrams that came in were not shared with me; they went into the front office and I was never invited to see them regularly. Almost every day, Streator would call me several times on the telephone and ask if I had seen such-and-such telegram from the Department. Once

in a while that would be an EXDIS telegram, usually it was not. Whenever he would call I would say, “Yes, I have seen it and this is what we're doing about it.” Which was always his second question. On those rare occasions when it was an EXDIS telegram I'd say, “No, I haven't seen that.” He'd say, “Oh, you don't see EXDIS telegrams?” and I'd say, “No, not unless you show them to me.” Then he'd have me come down and I'd see that particular telegram and tell him what I proposed to do about it, if it involved Political Section activity or response, which it often did. On my last day there, after a year, he called as usual several times. On the last call he said, “I've been calling you about these telegrams for a year, and you have always seen it, and you've always made arrangements to deal with it. I don't know why I keep calling you.” Of course, I wondered too. He's that kind of a very close manager. He needs to feel that there is nothing happening that he is not involved in, that is not under his control. Since then I've talked to people who have worked with him at NATO and other places and this apparently has been SOP throughout his career.

Q: Did you get any feel for his relationship with Brewster? I mean, was Brewster pushing something, or was he sort of absorbing, with all this. In the first place these staff meetings sound like a tremendous use of important time for the Embassy, to have staff meetings to inform the Ambassador. It's all very nice, but at the same time these are all working people. It's a lot of resource time.

SULSER: Some of my colleagues, other section leaders, used to complain about having to go down there every day and spend a half-hour to 45 minutes, getting nothing for it, no response or guidance, or being reined in on anything either, which you'd have to expect sometimes too. That it was a waste of time they would rather be spending doing something else. Other than invoking the Ambassador's name to get us transferred if we didn't like the way he did business, I really couldn't tell what their relationship was. I had no reason to believe it was difficult in any way, or that it was really the Ambassador who was pushing any of this stuff.

It might have been Streator's idea, but the Ambassador seemed to be behind the plan to convene meetings of selected U.S. ambassadors in Western Europe quarterly to talk about regional things, keep in touch with each other on common problems, such as European integration, NATO, and things like that. This was Blackwill's area, at least as far as political-military things were concerned, and he acted as the executive secretary, if you will, of these meetings. The first one was held at Brewster's invitation in London, and the others were held in other places. They didn't include all U.S. ambassadors in Western Europe by any means, just what they considered the principal ones, France, Germany, Italy, NATO. Not long after this started, probably after the first meeting, I was informed that Blackwill was being detached from the Political Section and henceforth would get instructions from the DCM and Ambassador. About nine months after I got there, Blackwill was transferred to Tel Aviv as political counselor, and Streator asked me to write his Efficiency Report, even though Blackwill had worked theoretically as a member of my staff only the first three months I was there, and had been six months up in the front office. I wrote a good Efficiency Report and Streator put the reviewing officer statement on it.

Once, during these daily meetings with the Ambassador, the Ambassador noted that President Carter was not getting very good press in Britain, and did anyone have any ideas what we might do to improve this. I said I knew that the Guardian, the major national newspaper of an independent political sort (now—in 1994—The Independent), had off-the-record editorial staff background meetings for invited people. If the Ambassador was interested in doing that, the editor of the editorial page was an old friend and I could arrange for him to be invited to meet with the editorial staff of the Guardian to explain and defend Carter's policies. As usual, there was no reaction to this suggestion. I never heard any more about it until about a month later I got a telephone call from my friend at the Guardian asking if I could have lunch with him the next day. He told me then that the Ambassador had been in the day before for such a session. Apparently, the Ambassador had decided that this was something that might be worth doing, but instead of asking me, who had made the suggestion, to set this up, he asked the Press Attach# to arrange it.

The reason my friend, who chaired these meetings, wanted to see me afterward was to ask me about the Ambassador, because he said of the scores of such meetings they had had with various ambassadors, government officials, business leaders, etc., this was the least informative, most unresponsive such meeting he had ever participated in. He said he had gotten up and walked out during the meeting while the Ambassador was speaking because he didn't have anything to say. I was in the very uncomfortable position of being asked what I thought about this. What could I say to an old friend? I did not want to be in the position of criticizing my Ambassador, but based on my own observations of him in these daily staff meetings I was not totally surprised. I just tried not to respond, not to join in the criticism.

During both of my London political tours, I gave talks on U.S. foreign policy at the senior British military colleges, and I usually handled briefings for visiting American groups, World Affairs Councils, university groups, whatever, about U.S.-U.K. relations. On two occasions during the time I was there with Brewster, people from these groups came up to me afterwards and introduced themselves as trustees of Yale University and asked me what I thought about my Ambassador. I tried to say nothing critical whatsoever about him, but they would proceed to tell me how glad they were to get rid of him, that he had been a detriment as head of Yale, I suppose because of his sympathy with the sit-ins and whatnot during the Vietnam War. These trustees claimed that during his time as president of Yale their fund-raising had suffered badly because a lot of the alumni of Yale who normally could be counted on to contribute substantially to endowment funds were so critical of him. These occasions in which people were putting me on the spot were very difficult.

By the time these incidents occurred, I was already a short-timer.

Q: I can understand your unhappiness, but what happened? Why did you leave within such a short time?

SULSER: About three or four months after I got there I was attending a Conservative Party conference with Ray Seitz. About the second day, he wasn't there anymore. I began to worry that something had happened to him. I telephoned the Embassy and learned that he had been called back to London because the Assistant Secretary for Africa was in town and they wanted Ray to look after him. Neither he nor anybody else in the Embassy had bothered to tell me that he was being called back and that I was up there for the rest of the conference on my own.

Q: It sounds like...I don't know. Discipline just wasn't there. Or normal courtesy.

SULSER: There was no problem in covering the rest of the conference and doing up the report afterward and everything. The reason the Assistant Secretary for Africa was there was to meet with the British regarding plans for the independence of Rhodesia, to become Zimbabwe. Dick Moose was the Assistant Secretary and he was meeting with David Owen, who was the Foreign Secretary. After I got back from the Conservative Party conference and could follow these discussions that were going on, I was having lunch one day with Tom McNally, who was another old friend. He had been one of the junior staffers in the international section at Labor Party headquarters during my previous assignment and then moved up to be the International Secretary. When Callaghan became Foreign Secretary, McNally became his political adviser, and now when I was there as Political Counselor, Callaghan was the Prime Minister and McNally was his political adviser at No. 10 Downing Street. I was having lunch with him one day and he asked me how I thought these talks about Rhodesia were going. I told him, “Well, they seem to be going alright, but there is one little point on which Moose is unhappy, thinks that Owen is doing the wrong thing, so he has sent a telegram back to Washington suggesting that Secretary Vance call Owen and reinforce the U.S. view on this particular point.” As I learned later, when McNally went back to No. 10 after this luncheon, he ran into David Owen on Downing Street, between No. 10 and the Foreign Office, and said, “Oh, David, you're going to be getting a call from Cyrus Vance about these talks.” Owen, apparently, went in and

complained to Johnny Graham, who was Under Secretary for African Affairs, one of Ray Seitz' regular contacts, that the Americans were “going over his head to the Prime Minister.” He was annoyed about this, that the U.S. had “gone over his head to the Prime Minister,” which I didn't see as anything like that. I was having lunch with an old friend, who happened to be the political adviser to the Prime Minister, who asked me a direct question on how we thought the talks were going. I never have learned to lie, or at least not very convincingly, when somebody asks me a question. So I answered his question.

The next day, the Ambassador called me in for the second time since I had gotten there and said he was afraid my usefulness at the Foreign Office had been lost because the Foreign Secretary was mad at me. Johnny Graham had told Ray Seitz about this and Seitz had told the Ambassador and the Ambassador called me in and said he was afraid my usefulness with the Foreign Ministry was finished and he was going to request my transfer. I said, “That's fine, Mr. Ambassador, I'm not happy here anyhow, and I'm sorry but I'll be glad to get out of here.” I went back to my office and called Carl Ackerman, who was still chief of Foreign Service Assignments, and Bill Galloway, who was executive assistant to the Under Secretary for Management, and told them that they would be getting a request from the Ambassador for my transfer, and that this was fine with me. Of course, they had not heard about it yet. In fact, it wasn't until more than two months later, as I learned in due course, that the Ambassador had sent in his message to the Director General asking not only that I be transferred, but also that the number two in the political section, Jerry Friedman, be transferred. No reference to any specific incident like this business over Rhodesia, but because he wanted to move Binns and Seitz into those jobs. There were ten officers in the political section then. Seitz was the most junior of them. He was an old-style 04. Binns was the second most junior, a junior 03. Brewster wished Binns to be the chief of the section and Seitz to be the deputy chief. I learned later that the Department, after discussing it among the responsible people in Washington, decided that there was no way they could prevent the Ambassador from moving Binns and Seitz into these jobs on an acting basis. But since neither one of them was a senior officer, they would on paper

put Binns into the No. 2 job and leave the No. 1 position, on paper, vacant for the duration of Binns' assignment there. Which meant in effect that the political section would operate one person short. They would have nine officers instead of ten. The Ambassador agreed to this. I learned from friends in Washington that he had asked for Friedman's transfer as well as my own, so he could give a career opportunity to these relatively junior officers. It was several weeks after that that Friedman finally told me he was being transferred. No one in London had told me. Friedman told me when he was called in to be told they were going to request his transfer, Streator had done this and had instructed him not to say anything to me about it. But he reached the point when he just couldn't stomach going to these daily meetings any more, and he wanted me to know why he would refuse to go to them, because they were kicking him out. I told him I sympathized with him, I could understand why he did not want to continue to go to those meetings, but I thought he ought to know that I was also leaving—which he had not known up to that point. They had not told him I was being transferred; they had not told me he was being transferred and had told him not to tell me. I continued to go to those meetings until my assignment to Rotterdam came through.

The day I got my orders I went on annual leave and had no intention of going into the Embassy any more. Let Binns and Seitz have those jobs. Friedman did the same thing. His DCMship in Abidjan came through about the same time my transfer to Rotterdam did, and we both went on leave and vacated our offices. Inspectors arrived at that point, for which Friedman and I had helped prepare the required documents, and the head of the inspection team called me at home one day to ask me to come in the office. He had formed his own impressions, had heard a lot of things from different people about how the post was managed, and wanted to ask me some questions about it. I still tried to be as objective as I could. Leave out the personal stuff to the greatest extent I could in responding to his questions. More than four months later, when I was in Washington for consultations after I had been in Rotterdam for three months, I was allowed to see the inspection report and found that the inspector had chastised the management of the post,

criticized the Ambassador for playing no role and for allowing Streator to run the place with a heavy hand. The Deputy Inspector General, an old London colleague from my second time there, told me that Brewster had hit the roof over the inspection report and had tried to get it suppressed. I was interested to note that Terry Arnold, the fellow who had headed the inspection team, got a principal officership for his final assignment, as well, whereas a lot of the senior officers running inspection teams got ambassadorships. So I guess Brewster still had some clout around there, with an old roommate of his as Secretary of State. It was a very unhappy experience.

Q: To finish up here...Ray Seitz became the only Foreign Service officer ever to become ambassador to Great Britain.

SULSER: I recognized he was an exceptional officer. Before I left London I successfully recommended him for the Director General's reporting award and obtained his promotion to 03 ahead of his class by stating in his efficiency report that of the ten officers in the section, he was the only one I could see as ambassador at his next post, having in mind a small embassy in Africa. When the award and early promotion came through, he acknowledged his debt on both counts in a letter to me in Rotterdam. A year later, he went back to Washington as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in Public Affairs and became Executive Secretary of the Department before returning to London as DCM. Then he was appointed Assistant Secretary for Europe and then back to London as Ambassador. When I wrote to congratulate him on being the new Ambassador to the Court of St. James and the first career officer to hold that position, I told him that he now joined me as the only Foreign Service officer to serve three times in London, which I believe is correct. I suppose he is now out of there; I think Admiral Crowe is there now.

Q: Yes, I think he's out. What about Ed Streator?

SULSER: Streator stayed on a long time. The rest of Brewster's time and through the next two if not three Ambassadors he remained the DCM, then he was to get an

ambassadorship in Africa but failed the physical. He had had a heart attack before he came to London as DCM. He had heart surgery, as I understand it, and then went to Paris as head of our mission to OECD and then retired. He took a job as Executive Secretary of the American Chamber of Commerce in London, where he was the last time I heard anything about him.

After I had been in Rotterdam for a time, my friend on the Guardian sent me a clipping from the New York Times, an article by R.W. “Johnny” Apple, who was then the London bureau chief, later the Washington bureau chief. It was an article about Brewster called “The Silent Ambassador,” saying that of all the recent ambassadors to London, Brewster seemed to be the quietest in terms of his involvement, almost nonexistent in terms of impact.

Shortly before I left London, Richard Perle, who was well known as the political military adviser to Senator “Scoop” Jackson, came to London on a CODEL visit, and we organized a luncheon for him in the Ambassador's private dining room with McNally and a couple of other influential young Brits. During the course of the conversation McNally said this might be his last chance to see Binns, whom he knew must be leaving pretty soon. Binns, visibly embarrassed, said no, his assignment had been extended. I made sure I saw McNally out and I told him, “You touched on an embarrassing point because Binns is not leaving, I'm leaving. Binns is taking my job.” McNally was very upset and said, “Why are they doing this? There couldn't possibly be any better Political Counselor from our standpoint than you,” and that sort of thing. (Bill Woessner had told me that when McNally learned at Woessner's farewell party that I would be replacing him, McNally responded very warmly and told the Ambassador they couldn't possibly have a better person for the job than me.)

I told him it went back to the luncheon I'd had with him about Zimbabwe, and that I gathered he had run into David Owen and mentioned our unhappiness with one particular issue and that Owen had been upset that we had “gone over his head,” as he put it, and had passed it on to Johnny Graham, who passed it on to Ray Seitz, who told the

Ambassador. As a result he was booting me out of there. McNally got very upset and said, “They can't do that! I will see that the Ambassador never gets to see the Prime Minister again; I can prevent that, I can see that he is never in No. 10 again,” and so on. I said, “Please, don't do anything like that. U.S.-U.K. relations are a hell of a lot more important than the career of Jack Sulser. Please don't do anything like that. In fact, I am glad to be leaving here. I'm not enjoying working with these guys. I am out of here!”

This has been kind of a confessional for me. I am putting on this tape things I have never said to anybody in the 16 or 17 years since this happened.

Q: Well obviously, I think it's very important to understand some of the things that go on. This is both organizational, how things are done. I knew very little about Brewster except that he had the reputation at Yale of turning the asylum over to the lunatics. Yale had a very bad reputation during the Vietnam War of not being sound, in other words, there was a great student rebellion and all of that but most other universities and colleges seemed to weather this fairly well by allowing people to say their piece, but Yale seemed to have gone completely overboard. And Brewster seemed to have gone for student popularity as opposed to what I would call “soundness,” saying that everybody has the right to talk, even free speech was curtailed at Yale, from what I understand. I'm only speaking hearsay.

SULSER: That was more or less what these two members of the board of trustees said, whom I met very casually; they had no hesitation about giving me their view and how they hoped that with him gone their fund-raising would improve again. But I never had an argument with him. The closest I ever came to having an argument with Streator was shortly after I arrived and had just come out of Personnel management in Washington. There was an officer assigned to the Political Section out of the Department. Streator wanted me to use what he presumed were my connections in PER to get the assignment canceled, and instead to get so-and-so, who was a friend of Streator's. Having just come from PER, where I fought endless and largely losing battles to keep people from operating that way, I refused to do this. I think he may have tried on his own, but it didn't work and

I didn't help him. Otherwise, on the face of things, our relations were always okay, and I went through these daily meetings with him and the Ambassador for more than six months after I had one foot out the door. I kept up appearances. Some of the things I said today I never even told my wife, and here I am putting them on tape.

Q: Turning now to Rotterdam. You served in Rotterdam from '78 to '82. What was the situation? The Vietnam War was all over, which had been a major irritant with the Dutch. What was the situation for American-Dutch relations during this period?

SULSER: They were fine. This was not only a great relief after my year in London, but I had the almost 100% sheer pleasure that goes with a post of your own. There are always things that cause some groups of people, at least, to protest. At that time it was El Salvador. We had a few demonstrations, people climbing up on the roof of the Consulate and hanging banners over the side about various things they objected to. Somebody in some country was killing somebody on our behalf and, they thought, at our direction, that kind of business. Occasional parades, we had the Tehran hostage business while I was there, plus there were Iranian student groups in Holland that Dutch intelligence forces thought were occasionally interested in doing something about me or the Consulate. So from time to time I had some police protection there.

Rotterdam was nice and quiet. Rotterdam really is an exceptional town. I was so pleased these past two days watching the Davis Cup match out of Rotterdam, because they showed many scenes of the place. It was a thoroughly pleasant post and unlike Amsterdam in almost every respect. It's just as Dutch, just as international, but is much more sober, a real business-oriented town. It's the largest port in the world, by far, much larger than Kobe-Osaka, which is second, and many times larger than New York, Hamburg, Marseille, San Francisco, all very small compared to Rotterdam. It's a post-oriented city. Although it's only 20 minutes or so by car from The Hague, it is very different from The Hague. It's enough of a distance from the Embassy so that I really was

very much on my own there. I went to weekly staff meetings at the Embassy, and the Ambassador and DCMs were always very cordial.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

SULSER: The Ambassador during most of my time there was Geri Joseph, a woman from Minneapolis, former newspaper columnist, former co-chairman of the National Democratic Committee, friend of Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale. A very, very pleasant and capable woman. And Tom Dunnigan was DCM, whom I had known in my first London days—my wife was his secretary, as a matter of fact—so he was my wife's boss at the beginning of our Foreign Service and he was my boss at the end of my Foreign Service. Then with the change of administration Bill Dyess became Ambassador, but that was only about the last year I was there, so there was less connection. We had had a Consulate in Rotterdam for nearly 200 years. In fact, we celebrated the 200th year of Netherlands-U.S. diplomatic relations during my last year in Rotterdam. The longest period of uninterrupted relations the United States has had with any country in the world. There were year-long festivities which were very pleasant to participate in. One of the events was a yacht race from Rotterdam to New York, done in two phases, the larger ones that could go straight across and the smaller ones that needed to stop at the Azores. They had two different starting dates. One of my good contacts, who was head of one of the three elements of the Christian Democratic Party in Holland, also was the CEO of a large insurance company that sponsored one of the yachts in the direct race to New York. I had never had anything to do with yachting before but learned that, when you sponsor a yacht in a race such as this, the sponsor has the right to re-name the yacht for the period of the race, which he did. He put it in the name of his insurance company, Stad Rotterdam, which means City of Rotterdam. He invited me to do the christening of this “new” yacht. Ambassador Joseph was invited to christen one of the competitors. The yacht I christened won the race, which was a special pleasure. One of the local companies, De Kuyper distillery, sponsored a reception to start the race, hired a big cruise ship, a river boat paddlewheel kind of thing with a couple of hundred guests to go down the river from Rotterdam to the mouth and

witness the official start of the race. There was also a destroyer of the Royal Netherlands Navy. It was a very gala affair, a lot of fun.

The city government in Rotterdam was Labor Party; the Lord Mayor was one of the vice-chairmen of the Labor Party who joined the Cabinet when the government was reorganized, shortly after. I had very easy relations with City Hall and with several Christian Democratic and FVP businessmen, lawyers in town. I was a member of the Rotterdam Golf Club, which was good fun.

Q: How did the Dutch view the Germans at that time?

SULSER: I'm glad you mentioned that because I would have hated to record my impressions of Holland without getting on to that subject. Rotterdam is the largest port in the world because it is the major port for Germany, not because of Holland. It's at the mouth of the Rhine, and most of the stuff that goes in or comes out of Rotterdam is destined for or originates in Germany. The Dutch are so sensitive to being second cousins to the Germans—the Dutch language is really a dialect of German, although they would argue with me if they heard me say that; it's very close to Plattdeutsch but is officially recognized as a language. If you speak German you can be understood in Holland and you can learn Dutch after learning a few words that are different in the two languages. But the Dutch are so concerned about being overwhelmed by the Germans that some of my Dutch friends, while they preferred German wine, would drink it only in the privacy of their own homes. They didn't want to be seen drinking German wine in restaurants or public places. Although Rotterdam really is at the mouth of the Rhine, the Dutch call it the Maas because shortly after the river crosses the border from Germany into Holland it's joined by two smaller rivers coming out of Belgium, including the Meuse or Maas, and the Dutch choose to name the river Maas from that point, although the Rhine is contributing three-quarters of the water into this combined stream. One minor little tributary that empties into the North Sea at Leyden, they call the Rhine. The chairman of the port promotion council during the time I was in Rotterdam was a German citizen, head of a German-

owned shipping company there in town. But you never see in any public references to him or the sort of official bio that's available from the port promotion council that he is in fact a German citizen.

The German Consul General during my time was a very unusual person. He was bilingual in Netherlands, which is not so unusual, but really was at home in the language because he went to school in Holland. His parents were anti-Nazi and didn't want him educated in schools in Germany during the Nazi times. When Germany invaded Holland in 1940, most of the kids at the school, which was a Friend's boarding school, were evacuated to England, but the headmaster of the school told him, “Look, if you go to England, you're going to be an enemy alien there and be treated as an enemy-alien. I think you'd better go back home to Germany.” So he went back home and not long after was drafted into the German Army. At some point during his military service, in a routine inspection I think, anti-Nazi literature was found in his duffel bag and he was imprisoned by the Nazis. You'd think with that kind of background he'd be welcome in Holland as a representative of the new Germany, and feel comfortable there. But in fact he told me he was very uncomfortable there, and his wife refused to live there. She stayed in Germany because when she first came to Holland she felt she was being treated badly by the Dutch.

Our Dutch friends used to make jokes about the Germans all the time, and I witnessed several very amusing incidents. We would have Dutch friends over or go to Dutch friends' houses for a party and there were other Dutch friends there who would arrive after we did, and delighted, so excited, to arrive at this party because on the way they had been stopped by some German car full of tourists to ask for direction. The Dutch would deliberately mislead them, give them the wrong directions. A few minutes later they would arrive at the party and be all excited because they had pulled a trick on these damn Germans. It's unfortunate. I understand their feeling; it's sort of the way Canadians feel about Americans, being overwhelmed by this much larger cousin next door who speaks the same or similar language and threatens to take them over economically or

commercially. Unlike the Canadians, the Dutch did suffer a difficult occupation for four years or more.

Rotterdam has a special place in that context, because it was the only place that offered any significant resistance to the German invasion in 1940. Then, as now, the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps is headquartered in Rotterdam, and it had a sufficiently deep channel so that Dutch warships can steam up into the center of the city. When the Germans reached Rotterdam, there was a brigade of Dutch army, the Dutch marines and one or two ships of the Dutch Navy that fought them off, put up some real resistance, held up the German advance for several days. That was when the Germans got annoyed, called up the Luftwaffe, and blew the place to smithereens. The whole medieval city center was wiped out in one day of German raids, and then the Dutch government surrendered, the Queen fled to England and that was the end of it. So the Rotterdamers have something to be proud of in that connection, but they have a very sensitive attitude toward the Germans that I, living in Germany and Austria for 13 years and having been a POW, which is nothing like the occupation the Dutch went through, never felt. But the Dutch certainly did and I suspect still do.

Q: You had mentioned the differences between Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

SULSER: Amsterdam gets all the tourists and all the congressional delegations. We had, I think, two congressional delegations during my four years in Rotterdam, both of them serious affairs. They were people coming to look at port facilities because they were trying to develop ports in their constituencies in the United States, to see how these things are done in Holland, some of the modern equipment that's available, that handles ships of tremendous size and loads and unloads them in a matter of hours, etc. We had one other more social CODEL, Tom Railsback, from my home district, then the congressman from Illinois where I was born and raised, came to Amsterdam. He and Henry Hyde, a friend of his, came down to visit us in Rotterdam, which had not initially been on their itinerary, because I knew him. They talked to our police chief about the drug scene. Amsterdam has

all the tourists and the CODELs and the trouble that goes with it, such as lost passports, and the drug scene with American citizens in jail. During my four years in Rotterdam we only had one American citizen in jail, and that was somebody who had been arrested and tried and imprisoned in the Amsterdam district but for some reason or other got transferred to a jail in our district. One of our consular officers had to go from time to time to visit him and see that he was being treated alright, allowed to communicate, bring him reading material and such. That is not a problem in Holland; there is plenty of English reading material, plenty of English programs on the television, because it's not a large enough language area to justify dubbing, so you see the American programs in the original language, unlike Germany where it is dubbed into German.

Amsterdam had repeated violent demonstrations with damage to the Consulate. We never had any damage that amounted to anything. Once, somebody squirted some stuff into the keyhole of our front door so that we had to get a locksmith to open up the next morning; but otherwise no significant damage. In Amsterdam every window in the Consulate was broken many times over...

Q: To what did you ascribe this? You must have sat down with the consulate in Amsterdam to try and figure out why are people in Amsterdam treated this way and in Rotterdam they're not. Because Amsterdam is renowned within the Foreign Service. We nearly closed the place down one time just because of violence.

SULSER: Yes, Amsterdam was closed for brief periods several times while I was in Rotterdam in order to repair damage and get the place back into operation. One time, Maury Bell, who was the Consul General there during this time, the damage was so bad and he was so fed up with the repeated incidents that he said he was not going to reopen the post until he had the kind of assurances from the local government and the kind of police protection that he felt the place needed to give it adequate security. Whenever Amsterdam would shut down, we'd have to pick up the slack. Rotterdam did all the immigrant visas for the country anyhow, so the consular work that was a problem was

the non-immigrant visas, passports, etc. In my four years in Rotterdam I don't know that we ever had a lost passport case, whereas in Amsterdam they had some every day and every Monday morning they'd arrive to open the post and find half a dozen people sitting on their front doorstep. Americans who had lost their passport, been rolled or whatever on the weekend who needed immediate attention. I think the difference is that sort of drug and hippy atmosphere in Amsterdam. The red light district in Amsterdam with the women sitting out in the glass show windows and whatnot. This is a well-known feature of life there. I was surprised to find there is such a district near the port for the sailors in Rotterdam too. But Rotterdam doesn't attract the tourists, and the sailors, I guess, know how to deal with these things without causing so much trouble. While Rotterdam is to some extent also a drug transit place, it just did not have the kind of violence they did in Amsterdam. They'd send their visa applicants and their passport applicants and stuff down to us when they were closed. One time it went on for a couple of months when we were the only consular post in the country. The Embassy in The Hague has no consular section, and The Hague is in Rotterdam's consular district.

Q: How far away is Rotterdam from Amsterdam by train?

SULSER: Oh, by train, 45 minutes. Nothing is very far in Holland, particularly between Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam. You get into some of the northeast areas, Friesland and whatnot, it gets a little more isolated. But the major cities are all very close to each other. You can get to The Hague in 15 or 20 minutes from Rotterdam, and a half hour from there to Amsterdam.

Q: Well, you left Rotterdam in 1982, is that right?

SULSER: Yes, in 1982, after four years there. When I got there from London, my predecessor, Joe Christiano, filled me in on efforts ever since the war to get a building of our own for the consulate in Rotterdam. The prewar consulate had been bombed out and ever since then we had been in rented quarters. One principal officer after another,

occasionally with an Ambassador's assistance, tried to find some way to get a building of our own. During the years we had a large AID program in Holland, some of the counterpart funds were used to acquire a site from the city of Rotterdam right in the center of town, on one of the main harbor inlets, on which the consulate was supposed to be built. But money was never appropriated to build it. We had this prime piece of property at the bottom of the main business street in Rotterdam, where it meets the river. Christiano had worked out a scheme with a local builder to put up an apartment house there. We would lease him the land at no cost, he would build the apartment house, sell or rent the apartments, and give us the three lowest floors to house the consulate. The U.S. would get a consulate to which it would have title at no cost. Just for making the land available. The Department had not yet approved this proposal, but Christiano said maybe I could get the Department to approve it. I went to Rotterdam on direct transfer because the deputy there was going on home leave the same time Christiano was being transferred to Tokyo. Three months later, when the Deputy came back from home leave, I got orders for consultation in Washington. While I was there, I managed to get the Department to approve this scheme. Before anything could be done, the housing market collapsed in Holland and the builder was no longer interested in going ahead.

During my last year there, through the contacts I had in City Hall, I learned that the city was planning to build a maritime museum on the adjoining property. I went to the official responsible and said, “I understand you're going to build this museum next door, and you can have a much nicer building if you incorporate our property as well and give us a corner of the thing.” He thought that was a great idea, because he thought the city-owned space wouldn't be sufficient for the kind of museum he contemplated. He got the architects to design a new museum that would have a corner for us, had models built, and then discussed it with his colleagues on the City Council. All this was at the time of El Salvador and the violence in Amsterdam and peaceful demonstrations in Rotterdam, and his colleagues on the City Council didn't think it would be a good idea under these circumstances for the city to do such a public thing for the United States as to give us a

corner of a public building. But by that time he was so keen on having our property for his museum he said if we can find a building somewhere else in town that would meet your needs and buy it for you, would you give us that piece of property. I said, in principle, sure, why not? The search began. The City had real estate companies looking for office buildings that were for sale. Every time they'd find one I'd get the DCM, the Admin. officer or whatever from The Hague to come down and look at the property. “No, this wouldn't suit us; No, that wouldn't suit us.” We were being very picky because the city really wanted to have our property.

Eventually they found a building that was large enough and in an accessible location that would meet our needs. FBO sent somebody over from Washington, did a survey of the thing. The city spent about a million dollars to acquire the property for us. FBO and SY between them spent about another quarter of a million adapting the property to our use. It wasn't quite ready for occupancy when I left, unfortunately, so I didn't get to enjoy the benefit of my lobbying with the city government to get this thing done. Don Junior, who was my successor, came out of my old job in Senior Assignments, incidentally, got to move into the building. About three years later the post was closed. My proudest achievement in Rotterdam in the end came to naught.

Q: Let's move to your last assignment. This was in '82 and you went where?

SULSER: I had decided I would retire after Rotterdam. A few months before I left, a big pay raise came through and it took me only a moment with paper and pencil to figure how much good this would do to my annuity, to hang on another couple of years—which was all I had. While I was in Rotterdam, the Senior Foreign Service was established and I was moved into it at the Minister-Consular level, but because of the years I had spent already in class 1, I had only four years. The transition was done in 1980 and I had only til '84. I could serve only two more years, but it made a big difference. But I had no assignment. I came back on home leave, for the first time in my career as one of those over-complement people I had tried to draw to the Department's attention when I was in

Senior Assignments. For the period of my home leave I was over complement, and then the Senior Assignments people asked me if I'd be interested in detail to the Pentagon. I said, “Sure, anyplace where I can work, so I don't have to walk the halls,” which I hadn't done yet because I was on home leave. They told me the job was Soviet/East European desk officer in the office of the Secretary of Defense, which appealed to me because that was my original interest when I came into the Foreign Service. I had done Russian and Balkan history at Wisconsin and wrote my Master's thesis on U.S.-Albanian relations, but of course that background played no part in the assignment whatsoever, because that was ancient history. When I went over to be interviewed by the Brigadier who was acting chief of Europe-NATO affairs at the time, he said, “You're kind of senior for this position, aren't you?” And I said, “Yes, I am. But I don't mind. It's an area I'm interested in and unlike you guys, we don't wear our rank on our sleeve or our shoulder-boards. So it's okay with me.” With their consent, the assignment went through.

I went over there in September of '82, at the conclusion of a couple of months of home leave. It was just after Reagan had signed a new National Security Council directive on differentiation among the Warsaw Pact countries. We were to treat Romania better than the others because she was independent of the Soviet Union in foreign policy, although a member of the Warsaw Pact. The Brigadier asked me to set up a DOD-wide task force to see what the various elements of the Defense Department was doing to implement or at least to observe this National Security directive—giving me the impression that he had reason to suspect that some parts of DOD were probably not. In fact, I found out later that the office to which we belonged had opposed this directive; went along with it very reluctantly and in fact did everything it could to undermine the policy of differentiation. As far as they were concerned, any member of the Warsaw Pact, was equally bad.

I put together a task force with representatives from the Army, Navy, Air Force, DIA, other parts of OSD, including the part that dealt with strategic trade controls, which was the part that had been most opposed to this policy. We had weekly meetings. I would prepare an agenda, assign subjects, and we'd get together once a week. I chaired this task force,

which started out with all the representatives at the colonel level, the typical action-officer level in the Pentagon. As the months wore on, these colonels started sending lieutenant colonels and majors. DIA was very good and kept up a good level of participation. I would write up papers for discussion and the day before the meeting run them all around that huge building, putting a lot of miles on my shoes.

Over time, we put together a sort of inventory of what each of these elements of the Defense Department was doing with regard to the Warsaw Pact countries. And some discussion of to what extent these operations or actions conformed with the differentiation policy. By the time we worked through all this information and discussed its relevance to the policy, it was clear that several of the offices didn't like the policy and were not supporting it in any way, were ignoring it as much as they could. I drafted a paper about what would need to be done to bring all these different programs into compliance with the directive. From a couple of the offices the answer came back that unless their bosses were convinced that my bosses were serious about implementing this, they were not to participate any longer in the task force. I wrote all this up. It went up to Perle, who was the Assistant Secretary for Defense; Richard Perle, the same one who had been at the luncheon in London several years before, and then to go on to his boss, Fred Ikl#, who was the Under Secretary for Policy. It never got beyond Perle's office. I could never get them even to look at it because I don't think they were that interested. The strategic trade control office, which was really the main offender of this policy, came under Perle as well and acted with his full blessing. Steve Bryan, who was an associate of Perle's on Capitol Hill, ran the strategic trade control office. While my immediate bosses in the Europe-NATO shop were sympathetic, and indeed had launched the whole project, at the next level up, the Perle level, there was no interest. The whole thing died on the vine just about the time I finished my assignment over there.

Q: What was the issue? Romania was a country without much economic power, were we supposed to be selling things to Romania that we weren't selling to the Soviets?

SULSER: Yes, that was specifically provided for in this National Security directive. That the Romanians could be trusted to protect technology that we were not willing to sell to other Warsaw Pact countries. One of the specific issues was that Nixon, when he went there as President, told them the United States would provide Land-Sat, one of the satellite technologies useful in mapping out agricultural areas, mineral resources and whatnot, through the photography from this Land-Sat satellite. That we would provide them an imaging station and give them access to all the data generated, which could in any case be purchased commercially in the U.S. The Office of Strategic Trade Controls over there opposed it. The principal but unstated reason they were opposed was not because they honestly believed Romania would pass this technology on, but because of Romania's record on Jewish emigration. Perle claimed to be the author of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Q: Perle himself was Jewish, wasn't he?

SULSER: Yes...

Q: ...and was a very strong...

SULSER: Steve Bryan also. The Romanian government was letting Jews emigrate only upon payment of large sums to reimburse the country for their education, because they said that Jewish emigration constitutes a brain-drain of some of the best educated people in the country, and that education cost Romania a lot of money. Now they were going to take their education abroad. They charged them large sums before they could get an exit permit to go here or emigrate to Israel. In most cases, those payments had to be paid either by relatives or by Jewish organizations, and this was the issue which I believe was most important to Perle. The military services were not opposed because they said Land-Sat technology was outdated, and the Soviets already had much more advanced satellite imagery. Our DIA participants had evidence that the Romanians were not sharing

intelligence or industrial information with the Soviets or any of the other Warsaw Pact countries. But Romania had this terrible blot on its shield on Jewish emigration.

Q: Well, Romania, in retrospect, had probably one of the worst human rights records of the whole bloc under Ceausescu but, was this a factor particularly?

SULSER: Jewish emigration was one aspect of this, but it was the aspect that particularly concerned this office, because of the fact that under Jackson-Vanik you cannot provide MFN treatment to countries that don't permit free emigration. So Romania suffered under that. DOD was supported in this by our Ambassador there, much to the chagrin of the State Department. Funderburk was the Ambassador, spoke the language from having gone to school there.

Q: I think his parents were Mormon missionaries or something like that.

SULSER: He sympathized with this stonewalling position of the Pentagon. The State Department was not happy with his position at all because he was not supporting established NSC policy, White House policy signed by Ronald Reagan!

Q: How did the Pentagon view the Soviet threat in those days, '82-'84?

SULSER: They put out these annual publications, “Soviet Military Power,” which I was involved in editing the first year I was there. They brought a woman over from CIA to edit it the next year. Everybody from Weinberger on down had a very strong position on the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact and did not to any extent see the East European countries as being in any significant way free of Soviet influence or penetration. They regarded the military forces of those countries as 100% additions to Soviet power. On the other hand, the intelligence community, including DIA, was regularly turning out studies on the reliability or lack thereof of the other Warsaw Pact countries to the Soviet Union. Weinberger, for example, referred to Jaruzelski as a “Russian general in a Polish uniform” without regard to intelligence community assessments that in imposing

martial law in Poland he may well have averted a Soviet military takeover, a Soviet invasion of the country. In other words, they had no room for any doubt as far as these Eastern Europeans were concerned. They were all part of the enemy, and they were non-cooperative to the maximum extent. I never felt that my position over there as Soviet-East European desk officer was of any importance or relevance at all, because Weinberger, Ikl#, Perle, were convinced they knew all they needed to know about that part of the world, and certainly didn't need any advice from any Foreign Service type.

Q: Did you find yourself treated with almost suspicion?

SULSER: No, not really. Lack of interest, yes. The people in my immediate office, the Europe-NATO shop, treated me fine, but at those higher levels there was never any desire to hear any advice from me or anything like that, or any evaluation even, much less advice. However, when I retired I was awarded the Secretary of Defense medal for meritorious service, accompanied by a beautiful citation signed by Weinberger recounting my “achievements.” For the most part I was restricted to arranging appointments, briefings and things like that for our ambassadors going out to those countries to call on Weinberger, or Carlucci, or sometimes on Perle or Ikl#. I'd arrange appointments and briefings for them with DIA and whatnot about the military situation in the country they were going to. And then this little task force that never amounted to anything. Carlucci made a visit to Yugoslavia very early on during my time there. I did a briefing book for him. That was not part of the Warsaw Pact, so it was not technically covered by the policy of differentiation, but was a country that we had supported under Tito for a good many years in order to maintain their independence from the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact neighbors. We had military assistance programs there which were not being implemented because these very hard-liners in the Pentagon were convinced that Yugoslavia was training Palestinian terrorists. There was some evidence that Palestinians went to military training schools in Yugoslavia, so as long as the Yugoslavs were providing assistance to

the Palestinians, the Pentagon was not interested in implementing this long-standing U.S.-Yugoslav military consultation or assistance program.

Poland during the martial law was another big thing. I represented the Pentagon on several inter-agency task forces to plan how we were going to exploit the first anniversary of martial law. We had numerous meetings, came up with all sorts of ideas and memos and contingency plans, only to have the Poles cancel martial law on the eve of the anniversary! Must have disappointed an awful lot of people in some of these agencies.

But no, I never felt any attitude of suspicion there. Once in a while I'd be instructed not to say something to my colleagues in the State Department. I was told from the beginning that the State Department was not to know about this task force. I never did mention it to anybody in the State Department while I was still in the Service. I was loyal to my masters, as far as that was concerned. As I say, I felt they didn't need me for anything but the most routine activity. But for me it was an interesting way to spend my last year and a half in the Foreign Service and to be reading all the telegrams from all the posts in parts of the world where I had once had a major interest. Astonished to find how little had changed in all those years, still the same systems, the same problems.

Since retiring in 1984, I've been astonished at how rapidly things have changed. Not for a few years, but certainly from 1989 onwards.

Q: Well, why don't we stop at this point? I think this is excellent.

End of interview